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INFERIOR POLITICS:

OR,

CONSIDERATIONS

On the Wretchedness and Profligacy of the Poor, especially in London and its Vicinity:—On the Defects in the present System of Parochial and Penal Laws:—On the consequent Increase of Robbery and other Crimes:—And on the Means of Redressing these public Grievances.

1027. 9. 1.  
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— — — — — Adspicè late  
Florentes quondam luxus quas verterit urbes!  
Quippe nec ira deùm tantum, nec tela, nec hostes,  
Quantum sola nocet, animis illapfa, voluptas.

Sil. Ital. XV. 92-95.

Non minùs principi turpia sunt multa supplicia quàm  
medico multa funera. Sen. de clem. l. i. c. 24.

With an APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

A PLAN FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE  
NATIONAL DEBT.

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THE SECOND EDITION.

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To which is added,

A COMPARATIVE VIEW of Mr.  
GILBERT'S BILL and the PLANS  
proposed in THIS WORK:

Shewing the exact Resemblance between them, as far as  
the Bill extends, and pointing out farther Regulations  
necessary to be adopted.

By HEWLING LUSON, of the Navy-Office.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

**T**HE following "Considerations" were written early in the last year, and intended for the press at that period, in the last session of Parliament, when some material alterations in the Police and Penal Laws were under immediate contemplation; but, as the Bill, brought in by the Solicitor-General for that purpose, was withdrawn, and the farther discussion of the subject postponed, it was deemed expedient to defer this publication till the present session of Parliament.

The manuscript has, in the mean time, been submitted to the inspection of some persons, no less eminent in abilities than in station, who have been pleased to speak of it in very favourable terms; and, though no authority, however respectable,

spectable, can or ought to influence the judgment of a free and intelligent people, the approbation of those, who are so well qualified to decide, cannot but afford a rational inducement to hope that this essay may rather meet with indulgence than censure from the candid reader, since, however defective its execution may be, its intention at least is laudable.

INFERIOR

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# INFERIOR POLITICS:

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## CONSIDERATIONS, &c.

**T**HE equality of mankind is a truth loudly proclaimed by the voice of nature at our birth, and awfully reiterated at the hour of our dissolution: "Our entrances and our exits" destroy those "baseless fabrics" which the artifice of human pride has erected to fill the intermediate scenes; and those dignified actors, who now "fret and strut their hour upon the stage," and look down with all the insolence of fastidious importance on the abject croud to whom the lower parts of the drama are assigned, will soon "be heard no more."

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Those communities, in which civilization has made the slowest progress, still preserve, with little deviation, that equality of liberty and independence which is the birthright of every human being. Among them, superior excellence in mental or corporeal powers is the only title to pre-eminence.

An Indian chief is placed at the head of his tribe, by their impartial and concurrent suffrage, because they conceive he excels them all in strength, in courage, or in penetration. — He leads them forth to battle, and is equally ready to sacrifice his life in their defence, or to crown the triumph over their enemies by the conquest of himself, and to mix again with the common mass, when the public cause no longer demands the exertion of his superior abilities. But, through the several gradations from this simple state of society to that of the most polished European Nations, the inequality of condition, among the different ranks of which they consist, increases with a continual progression, as they improve in refinement. Yet the advance, though constant, is by no means regular. Much depends on the constitution of government which prevails in contemporary states, who may yet have acquired an equal degree

degree of civilization. Where the Prince is absolute, the highest degree of inequality among the different parts of the community must of necessity prevail; and it is the interest of the Monarch to increase it by every means in his power, since the permanence and force of his government manifestly depend on it. The whole system is a direct violation of the laws of nature, reason, and justice; and the tyranny of *one* can only be upheld by the advancement of a few, who, by an union of interest, of property, and of power, may afford him constant and effectual assistance in oppressing the injured multitude; though, if they knew their strength, and were able, like their despotic rulers, to unite in a firm and consistent league of resistance, they would soon convince their tyrants that they had power to assert their rights.

This their governors know; and it is therefore an invariable maxim with them, that freedom of speech should by no means be allowed to their subjects, and that political matters are far above their comprehensions,

Such is the mysterious, gloomy, malevolent, system, by which arbitrary power still maintains its baleful influence, even in the most civilized and enlightened nations of the globe; but the ra-



pid advancement and extensive diffusion of knowledge, of liberality, and of humanity, throughout Europe, in the present century, afford the strongest presumption to hope, that the reign of civil, as well as religious, tyranny is nearly at an end.

Governments, founded on the firm, equitable, and rational, basis of liberty, being diametrically opposite in their constitution and operation to those where absolute monarchy prevails, must be productive of effects directly contrary. Rejecting, both in principle and practice, the absurd and slavish doctrines of "millions made for one," of passive obedience, and of non-resistance, they maintain, that all mankind have an equal right to freedom; that all Government is a *trust* expressly or tacitly confided by the people, to whom their rulers are accountable for the exercise of their power; and that, when the latter violate the constitution from which their authority is derived, and government which was established for the benefit of the community becomes an engine of fraud, injustice, and oppression, the injured people are absolved from their allegiance; and the public good, which is the supreme law, demands that the constitution should be restored to its original purity, or a new one founded on its ruins.

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The equality of degree, which prevails in the most uncivilized and natural state of society is inconsistent, not only with *any* form of government, which necessarily implies subordination, but it is irreconcilable with civilization itself, even in its first advances to refinement, and totally incompatible with that high degree to which it has now attained in every polite nation of Europe.

Our commerce, our wealth, our customs, our arts, nay even our *knowledge*, all conspire to disseminate profusion, luxury, corruption, and depravity, and to destroy that equality of condition, that unconscious dignity of virtue, that amiable plainness of manners, which flourished in the early ages of the world, and which never fail to charm, in description, those who, in this age of splendid folly and polished villany, retain sufficient firmness of mind to resist the fascination of custom, and to prefer the beautiful simplicity of nature to the deceitful allurements of art. Let us suppose this state of natural simplicity and equality still to exist in some favoured Island in the hospitable bosom of the Pacific Ocean; and that it is exempt from that savage ferocity and brutal ignorance which more or less prevail in those Countries whose inhabitants, customs, and manners, have been

been so attentively noticed and so accurately described by the most sagacious, acute, indefatigable, and humane, investigator the world has ever produced.

The people of this fortunate Island would find their liberty and their happiness secured by the moderation of their desires, and their innocence by the native uncorrupted simplicity of their hearts.—A casuist might assert, that the goodness which is founded in the ignorance of evil could not be meritorious; and that, where there is no temptation, there can be no virtue: and perhaps he might be able to support his opinion with unanswerable arguments. But no sceptic would be hardy enough to deny, that the moral rectitude of their conduct, resulting from the mere impulse of nature in the heart of man, and terminating in his happiness, is an irrefragable proof of the essential difference between good and evil, and of the innate propensity of the human mind to goodness. Else why should a being, equally ignorant of good and evil, choose the former? and why should his happiness be the consequence of his choice?

If there really does exist a people in the state of natural innocence here supposed, (which seems  
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by no means improbable,) their climate, their manners, and their felicity, would nearly realize that paradise which Milton has described in the most animated and enchanting strain of sublime poetry.

But, should the adventurous hand of some European discoverer plant the tree of knowledge in this second paradise, or (to drop the allegory) should the arts and the commerce of civil society, with their attendant train of evils, be introduced among them, the reign of peace and innocence would be at an end; from being the happiest, they would become the most miserable, of the human race, till the tumultuous conflict of contending interests and passions should be appeased by the establishment of arbitrary power, which the superior force or subtilty of one might usurp, or subside by the settlement of some free form of government, which the unanimous consent of all might appoint.

Equality and independence are no less the *right* than the choice of every human being. All authority therefore is founded in compulsion; and the only difference between free and despotic governments is in their original constitution; the former, being established by the deliberate act of  
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the whole community, determining by whom, in what manner, and to what extent, they must be controuled; the latter, by the unjust exertion of a violence which bears down all opposition, and, without the consent of *any*, demands the implicit obedience of all.

An investigation into the form of Government that prevailed in Britain antecedent to the glorious Revolution can be of little importance; since it was not till that memorable æra that the present admirable constitution was firmly established, and its limits accurately defined. Much has been said, by the advocates for liberty, of the antiquity and power of our Parliaments; still more, by the interested tools of despotism, to prove the absolute Power of our Kings: but surely all this important trifling might well be spared, when the question in dispute may be brought to a much shorter issue. It is not, “ what *have* Kings or Parliaments done “ in former periods of our history? ” but “ what “ *ought* they to have done? ” or rather, “ what “ are they, by the principles of the British Con- “ stitution, by the still more sacred laws of na- “ ture and justice, by the urgent and complicated “ necessities of the times, by the accumulated “ and almost intolerable burthens and oppressions “ of the people, *now* required to do? ” This is  
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the important question which every Briton has a right to ask ; not indeed in the flippant style of impertinent arrogance, or idle curiosity, but in the firm yet anxious and respectful terms in which the crew of a vessel, shattered with storms, and surrounded with breakers, might consult with their superior officers on the most probable means of extricating them from a situation, which, threatening indiscriminate destruction, would demand general consultation.

This momentous Question comprehends, in its discussion, subjects so numerous, so different, so complicated, and so extensive, that the abilities of any individual, however great, would be totally inadequate to the arduous task, which can only be in any degree accomplished by the sincere, vigorous, and united, exertion of the collected virtue, wisdom, and experience, of those justly-admired statesmen, on whose conduct, at this awful crisis, the future welfare, or perhaps existence, of the British Empire greatly depends.

Yet, though it would argue the extreme of folly and arrogance, for any private member of the community to obtrude his opinions on the public as regulations for the conduct of the Legislature, it has frequently happened, that men of plain

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common understanding have suggested some hints, which those of superior abilities may deem not entirely unworthy their attention.

To characters, thus eminently distinguished, the disquisition of questions, and the adoption of measures, in the higher departments of political œconomy, properly belong; and to such the writer of the present essay willingly resigns them, while he pursues a path more fitted to his station and abilities, and descends into the humble vale of society, where, perhaps, he may find objects of political investigation highly important to the community in themselves and their consequences, however inconsiderable they may, on a transient view, appear.

Should his disquisition be the means of alleviating the misery, restraining the oppression, or correcting the vices, incident to the lower rank of the community, he will have reason to rejoice in the success of an attempt, which he is impelled to make by an ardent desire to promote the interest of his Country, to support the cause of Liberty, and to assert the rights of Humanity.

It has already been observed, that Government and Civilization are the causes of social inequality,



ty, which increases in proportion with the Despotism of the former and the refinement of the latter. Britain, though exceeded by no other Country in wealth, in commerce, in arts, in luxury, and in all those elegances of life which necessarily tend to exalt the higher and depress the lower part of the community, is blessed with a constitution of government which has justly excited the admiration and envy of the surrounding nations: and the spirit of liberty, by which it is inspired, greatly counterbalances and restrains those evils, which, in an arbitrary government equally refined, the poor would inevitably experience from the pride, avarice, and tyranny, of the rich, nurtured by luxury and indolence, and indulged with power.

The happy union of the three different principles, of which all the civilized governments of the world are composed, in our excellent Constitution, admits of the splendour of Monarchy without its rigour, the dignity of Aristocracy without its insolence, and the liberty of Democracy without its licentiousness.

The *uncontrouled* operation of these just and rational principles would compensate, as far as any institution of government possibly can, for that

equality, which mankind, when they exchange the state of wild uncultivated nature for that of civil society, must of necessity give up, by securing to every degree, and to every individual of the community, their liberty and prosperity, so long as they obey those laws, to which they have, by their representatives, consented.

In Britain, though the *subordination* essential to all government, and the various degrees of ranks which are inseparable from the monarchical and aristocratic forms, are legally established, there are many respects, and those the most important, in which an equality unknown to any other constitution of Government universally prevails, and extends from the highest to the lowest order of the community.

The poorest peasant or mechanic has an *equal* right with the highest Noble of the realm to a public trial by his Peers, to be confronted with his accusers, to have counsel to plead in his defence, and every other privilege which the most dignified criminal can demand; the trial by Jury, in civil causes, affords him equal security in his liberty, property, and character; (for these, however inconsiderable they may appear to the perverted optics of pride, are of equal, nay, perhaps,

haps, of *greater*, importance to the mechanic than to the peer;) the right of voting gives him a voice in the Legislature; the liberty of the Press affords him the means of exposing a proud oppressor to that public contempt and hatred his tyranny cannot fail to excite in a generous people. These are *some* of the valuable, glorious, and *exclusive*, privileges of an Englishman! They ought to be, and, if the spirit of the Constitution were allowed to operate with unrestrained energy, they *would be*, extended to *every* Briton; and, except in the limitation of the right of voting, and the partial privileges annexed to that right, both which are the disgraceful remains of feudal tyranny, they are actually so by the letter of it.

The influence of that absurd and slavish system, which had prevailed during so many centuries, was too powerful even for the glorious Revolution itself *intirely* to destroy. The wise, and virtuous patriots, who then established the solid basis of that liberty we now enjoy, had been taught, by fatal experience, that the preservation of Monarchy was essential to its security; and they feared, perhaps with reason, that, if they, at that period of national ferment, had extended the right of voting, and the privileges annexed to it, beyond the antient limits, they might not only too  
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much have weakened the power of the Crown, but even have sapped the foundation of their *own* authority to appoint a successor to the vacant throne.

Thus was the most excellent plan of Government, that ever was formed, left in an abrupt, unfinished, state by its founders. But the causes, which might prevent *them* from completing the glorious work, by establishing a more equitable, rational, and extensive, Representation, which ought not only to have comprehended the inhabitants of Great-Britain, but *all* the subjects of the British Empire, could not operate when time had given stability and firmness to the Constitution.

Had the important work been completed when our colonies were in their *infant* state, and the mother-country was unincumbered with an enormous weight of debt, accumulated by maintaining and defending them, they would neither have acquired power to establish their claim to Independence, nor would they even have been able to have advanced a *plausible* pretence for asserting it.

This reflection, so far as it relates to the present predicament in which we stand with the late  
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revolted Colonies, (now "free and independent States of North America,") may be deemed useless and impertinent; but, to those who consider we have *still* considerable colonial possessions to lose or to preserve, their present *unrepresented* state may suggest the idea of a *latent* claim to future Independence; and this surely is of sufficient importance to deserve some attention in any projected system of Parliamentary Reform.

Besides this material defect in the original formation of our constitution, it has suffered much, from the operation of various incidental causes, since its first establishment.

The influx of wealth, occasioned by the extension of commerce and the acquisition of territory, the immense fortunes gained by East-India plunderers, by contractors, by commanders of fleets and armies, and by the numerous tribe of inferior speculators, who, in time of war, prey on the vitals of the public,—and the creation of *ideal* property by the enormous increase of the national debt, — have jointly contributed to the growth of luxury, dissipation, vice, extravagance, and venality, among the rich; whilst the heavy accumulation of taxes, the insolence of upstart pride, and the contagious example of exalted villany,  
have



have operated equally in depressing and corrupting the bulk of the community. The *form* of the constitution remains; but its energy is greatly impaired; and, among the many threatening symptoms of its rapid decay, none is more alarming than the unbounded prodigality of the higher and middle ranks, the abject poverty and complicated wretchedness of the lower, and the universal corruption and depravity of all. These evils are incompatible with the existence of our excellent constitution; and, if not speedily and effectually remedied, must inevitably terminate in its destruction. •

There is no axiom more certain, than that *virtue* is the *basis* of liberty. On this foundation our constitution is erected. When it offered freedom to the community, it was on the supposition that they had firmness to defend the precious gift from the violence of tyranny, and virtue to guard it from the more dangerous and insidious arts of corruption.

If principles of integrity had their due operation on the conduct of the people, the right of choosing Representatives (limited as it is) would secure to them the possession of those liberties, which the constitution, coinciding with the unalterable



terable laws of nature and justice, declares to be their right.

Were the electors as tenacious of their honesty as they affect to be of their liberty, they would reject, with the most marked disgust and contempt, the candidate who had the *insolence* to offer them a bribe ; and their choice would fall on that man whom they conceived most likely, by his integrity and abilities, to preserve their rights, and to promote, not merely the *partial* interest of the Borough which gives him a seat, but the welfare of the whole community of which he is the Representative.

From a House of Commons thus elected the nation might justly expect the most salutary measures. They would not, indeed, annihilate the national Debt, nor abolish taxes ; but they would subvert that system of corrupt administration and factious opposition from which those Debts and Taxes have originated. They might not, perhaps, flatter their constituents with specious promises of *obeying* their instructions ; but they would render them essential services, by preferring their real interest to their unmerited applause. Their *domestic* frugality would be the surest indication of their attention to public œconomy ; the integrity

of their private characters, the test of their unaffected zeal for reformation ; and that upright firmness, which disdains to obtain a seat in parliament by corrupting their constituents, would afford a convincing proof of their real patriotism.

Nothing is more common than to hear electors, who appreciate their vote as they do any other article of traffic, complain of the venality of their representatives, and the general corruption of Parliament ; but these complainants would do well to remember, that a man of honest principles could not possibly be a proper object of *their* choice ; and that the candidate, who gives the highest bribe, has no other design but to sell his purchase to the best advantage ; and is, besides, the *fittest* representative they could possibly choose, as he not only is ready at all times to obey their instructions, but to follow their *example*.

The constitution, which vests in the body of electors the important privilege of appointing delegates to represent the commons of Great-Britain in Parliament, makes them the guardians of their own and the nation's liberty ; and consequently leaves them the alternative, of discharging this sacred trust with fidelity or of abusing it, though it manifestly intimates its confidence that the former  
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will be their choice. On the stability of this confidence the welfare of the people must ultimately depend ; its violation, in the least instance, would proportionably weaken, and its loss entirely destroy, the Constitution ; the *form* might remain, but the animating principle would be extinct, and the corruption of the best would generate the worst government that the invention of man could produce. If ever that fatal period should arrive, in which the national sense of honour and virtue, once the glorious characteristic of Britons, should be absorbed in luxury, avarice, profligacy, and venality, that *confidence*, which is the vital principle of liberty, which combines the whole community in one firm united compact, and ascends, in just gradation, from the people to their Representatives, and from them to the Sovereign, would be intirely withdrawn. The mercenary motive of self-interest, equally sordid in its desires, and impotent in its attempts to attain them, would be the universal actuating principle.

“ At length corruption, like a gen’ral flood,  
 “ So long by *watchful* Ministers withstood,  
 “ Would deluge all.”— POPE.

Every barrier, erected by the wisdom of our virtuous ancestors for the security of our freedom,

would be occupied by this invincible enemy ; and, to complete our humiliation and ignominy, tyranny would assume the form, and wear the mask, of liberty. The boasted privilege of election would become a most infamous and iniquitous job ; venal constituents would choose corrupt Representatives ; one principle would actuate minorities, majorities, and ministers ; the King and the people would be held in bondage by their servants ; and, though all the forms of the antient Constitution would be politically and punctually observed, it would be evident, to every nation in Europe, that the Government of England was vested in the *strongest and firmest Coalition!*

When a general profligacy and dissoluteness of manners prevail, all attempts to stop the progress of corruption by moral obligations will but increase the evil. What purpose does the oath against bribery at elections serve, but to perjure the bulk of the electors ? Is it possible to devise any surer means, to render this most solemn appeal contemptible in the eyes of the people, than the indifference, the frequency, and, in this particular instance of contested elections, the manifest *absurdity*, of administering it, when all the parties concerned are well assured it is, in many instances, tendered only to be violated ?

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The wit of man cannot invent a more certain and extensive mode, of disseminating corruption and vice among the people, than the various manœuvres, practised at contested elections for populous boroughs, have produced; nor can any thing, in a *political* light, (supposing *religion* entirely out of the question,) be more detrimental to a nation, than the infamous and indiscriminate abolition of all order, decency, truth, and sobriety, during these intervals of popular phrensy.

Whatever opinions the fashionable philosophy, or (to speak more properly) *impiety*, of the times may inculcate, there is no truth more certain, than that the well-being of a free state depends on the *virtue* of the people. This is not mere matter of opinion; it is a fact indisputably proved by the incontrovertible evidence of History in all countries and ages. Yet how little attention does it appear to claim in the most free and enlightened nation in the world? Virtue, morality, and conscience, the strongest incentives by which a rational being can possibly be influenced to great and good actions, are held in open derision by those who occupy the higher ranks of the community, and to whom the vulgar (whose manners and principles are formed by imitation) look up  
for



for examples. When they see the noblest principles of the human soul ridiculed and contemned, while successful fraud is admired, and triumphant villany applauded, by those whom they consider as their superiors in abilities, because they are so in station, can it be a matter of surprise that they are proportionably dissolute, unprincipled, and corrupt?

Religion and Patriotism having been too often assumed, by specious hypocrites, for the worst of purposes, and contemptuously discarded when the design has been accomplished, the multitude, judging merely by exterior appearances, conclude the former to be an imposture, and the latter a farce.

Exempt from the contagious influence of bad example, and the various incentives to vice from which their situation and habits of living equally secure them, the inhabitants of the country still retain much of their antient simplicity, virtue, equality, and independence. To *them*, many of the crimes and miseries incident to the lower order of the people in large manufacturing and corporate towns, and which *abound* in the Metropolis, are scarcely known, even by report. The peasant, whose happy lot places him at a distance  
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from these scenes of iniquity and corruption, has no idea of that comprehensive system of robbery distinguished by the appellation of *swindling*; even the more daring, but less injurious, attempts of pickpockets, housebreakers, and highwaymen, which in London supply the newspapers with articles of daily intelligence, are spoken of, in the country, as extraordinary occurrences.

The husbandman, who earns his bread by his daily labour, has not leisure for debauchery, nor appetite for luxury. His days, months, and years, pass in a regular succession of labour and rest, which fills at once the measure of his time and the extent of his ideas. The dawn of day calls him forth to work; the return of evening invites him to repose. Deriving from his salutary and active employment all the real comforts of life, he does not even bestow a *thought* on its superfluities. Blessed with a flush of health and “firmness of nerve” unknown to the “unwashed artificer,” the immured mechanic, or the emaciated manufacturer, he enjoys his plain and wholesome meal with a relish which the highest refinements of luxury cannot give. When, wearied with the toil of the day, he is rewarded with the comfort of sound, uninterrupted, sleep. Yet think not, ye proud and pampered minions of fortune!

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who cast an eye of supercilious disdain on this humble tenant of the shade, whom you at once envy and despise, that you are his superiors in that impartial estimate which reason and philosophy make of *man*, abstracted from the adventitious circumstances of rank and fortune, on which human vanity sets so high a value, though they are, in reality, only estimable when their possessors make a proper application of them, and despicable when abused.

You say the happiness of the peasant is founded in his insensibility. But are you sure he *is* that stupid being you suppose him? You pretend to possess the most refined susceptibility, and the strongest powers of reason; you assert that your ideas of felicity are elegant, diversified, exalted, and extensive: yet, with this superior excellence of intellectual capacity, your desires are ignoble and insatiable, your pleasures sordid and delusive, your expectations vain and abortive. The *irritability* of your inordinate passions, (which you mistake for sensibility,) continually demanding gratifications which human nature cannot give, makes you miserable when you allow yourselves to *think*; and you therefore wisely conclude, that your superior understanding is the cause of your unhappiness,

unhappiness, and that the peasant derives his felicity from his ignorance.

But in this you are greatly deceived. Nature does for *him* what philosophy and reflection ought to do for you. It teaches him, that *moderation is the boundary of human felicity*; it gives him a sufficient degree of sensibility fully to enjoy the happiness within his reach, and of reason to be content with that enjoyment. He has pleasures and desires, but they exceed not the possibility of gratification; and on this basis stands his happiness. In youth, the highest object of his ambition is to excel in the labours of the field, or in the sports of the green; to bear away the prize due to superior skill, strength, or agility, gives him more heartfelt satisfaction than victorious heroes derive from trophies stained with slaughter, and laurels blasted with envy. He is equally exempt from this mean and corroding passion, and from the care, the anxiety, the inquietude, and the disgust, which mix themselves with the pleasures of the debauchee. He knows no gratification superior to that of selecting the object his heart approves, of demonstrating his sincere and ardent affection for her in numberless different ways equally simple and engaging; he attends her to scenes of rural recreation; his disinterested regard is returned with

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equal sincerity ; wealth and pride, those enemies to human felicity, raise no obstacles to their humble nuptials ; and the happy couple, obtaining each a faithful partner and industrious helpmate for life, enjoy the *extent* of their wishes. If blessed with a hardy and healthful offspring, it is no less the business than the *pleasure* of their riper years to supply them with plain and wholesome diet ; with neat, though homely, raiment ; and to teach them that early industry and sobriety which defends them alike from the misery of want and the dangers of affluence. When thus formed for health, strength, and labour, to see them pursue the course in which they have taught them, more by example than by precept, to obtain that degree of calm contentment which nature liberally bestows on those whose humble aim attempts no higher object, constitutes the pleasure and pride of this faithful pair, when the entrance into the vale of years allows them only to renew, in the occupations, the diversions, and the nuptials, of their children, the pleasing scenes of their youth.

Such is, in general, “ the noiseless tenor ” of rustic life ; though it cannot be supposed that there are no examples of idleness, drunkenness, and wretchedness, even in the country. Their natural simplicity and sobriety of manners is liable

to temporary interruption from the events of contested elections; and, in time of war, they suffer a still greater and more permanent injury by being embodied in Regiments of Militia, and by the various encampments, which are not the least evils that *necessarily* accompany this severest scourge and disgrace of mankind. Nor does their virtue suffer alone; their liberty receives a still deeper wound by the iniquitous and tyrannical mode of impressing; and, while the industrious and reluctant husbandmen are thus dragged, like sheep, to the slaughter, their helpless wives and children, bereft of their support, are involved in penury, misery, and despair! These, it is true, are but temporary and partial evils; yet they are grievous in their duration, ruinous in their extent, and dreadful in their consequences. Necessity, "the tyrant's plea," has often been urged by statesmen in extenuation of this disgraceful method of manning our fleets, and in excuse for the complicated calamities of war! Grave politicians have not been wanting to suggest the expediency of a nation (never overburdened with inhabitants, and abounding with extensive tracts of fertile, though uncultivated, land) planting Colonies in distant regions to drain away her most useful subjects, exhausting her wealth and strength in maintaining and defending these Colonies, en-



gaging in the most ruinous and destructive wars, in every quarter of the globe, to establish their power and *accelerate* their independence! Nothing surely was requisite, to render absurdity systematical, but to plunge the nation into a *new* war, with the combined strength of foreign enemies and revolted subjects, to *preserve* that allegiance we had so long and so fatally been *labouring* to destroy.

On the eve of a victory,\* equally glorious and complete, over the most formidable enemy of the confederacy, and of ~~†~~ achievements which History will record to the honour of Britain and the disgrace of France and Spain, to conclude a peace, by which independence, acquired by ingratitude, injustice, and rebellion, was rewarded with a gratuitous extent of territory, no less unmerited than unexpected, may appear, to many *superficial* politicians, a remarkable instance of undeviating consistency and perseverance in error.

But, on a more *attentive* consideration, the very circumstances, which expose this peace to such hasty censure, will demonstrate the measure to have proceeded from a profoundness of policy for which

\* 12th of April, 1782.

† The defence and relief of Gibraltar.

which the British Cabinet is not, in general, remarkably distinguished. The loss of our Colonies, the danger which threatened our Eastern possessions from foreign invasion and intestine convulsions, the alarming state of our finances, the formidable combination of our enemies, whose naval force (particularly on the part of the Dutch) would soon have increased to a degree beyond our utmost exertions to have opposed with probability of success, concur to prove, that peace was absolutely necessary to our existence as a people. To sheath the sword in the moment of victory was perhaps the surest means to preserve the *honour* of Britain.

The extent of boundary, which was liberally annexed to the declaration of American Independence, was a *gift* of a very equivocal nature. Perhaps, when unfolded by the hand of time, they may both be found to resemble that fatal present with which, Mythology informs us, the rebellion of Prometheus was rewarded by the Gods. Such was the *favour* France granted us by the cession of Canada, which we purchased at the moderate price of 70 Millions! There is little reason to doubt but the penetration of the French Cabinet foresaw the consequences which have resulted from the insidious present.

In

In making the late peace, our Ministry appear to have been convinced of the propriety of receiving instruction from an enemy. By a refinement in political vengeance, they will not only cause the Americans to inflict on themselves the punishment due to their perfidious ingratitude, "by granting them their will," but they will increase the severity of their chastisement by exceeding the limits of their expectation.

"The very Devil could not curse them better."

SHAKSPEARE.

Without recurring to the memorable example of Rome, the History of Britain, in the present Century, sufficiently proves, that extent of Empire is destructive to the well-being of free Government, which it equally tends to weaken and disunite. If its effect is the introduction of divisions and anarchy into States which have been long and firmly established, how much more strong and fatal must be its influence on the infant Republics of North America, where no settled system of government is yet formed, and where separate and jarring interests administer continual subjects of contention? Independence *alone* would have been sufficient to *perpetuate* disunion; but a *partition*

tion of extensive territories must soon collect the latent embers of civil discord, and blow them to a flame!

Even if it could possibly be supposed, that their different claims could be *amicably* adjusted, how are they to people, cultivate, and defend, an extensive tract of country, environed by nations of warlike and hostile Indians, and subject to the invasion of the Spaniards, whose hatred of the Anglo-Americans is no less implacable?

Thus ends the *third* war, produced, by our connection with America, in less than half a century; and from these wars have proceeded our enormous national debt and accumulated burden of taxes, at the same time that they have accelerated and extended the progress of luxury and profusion among the great, of misery and penury among the poor, and of a general corruption of principle and depravity of manners, which, if not speedily and radically reformed, must terminate in the most dreadful consequences.

The Metropolis and its populous and increasing suburbs, which together contain, on a moderate computation, one *eighth* part of the inhabitants of Great-Britain, experience the most severe and unremitting



remitting influence of these complicated evils. — There, as in a common center, the extremes of opulence and penury, of licentiousness and oppression, of splendour and wretchedness, unite. — There, human nature appears in its most exalted state of grandeur, and in its lowest depth of misery. There, too, even the *enemies* of Britain must allow, the sublimest virtues are contrasted with the vilest crimes; and the *most dignified* are, at the same time, the *most exemplary* characters. — The praise, which flattery indiscriminately lavishes on the possessors of a throne, cannot, in *Britain*, even at *this* time of national degeneracy, exceed the bounds of truth.

Before we turn from this bright prospect to the gloomy shades which the picture of the Metropolis exhibits, let us view it in its most favourable light, and applaud what all must admire, while we censure, and endeavour to suggest the means of rectifying errors, and reforming abuses, which none can approve.

It is scarcely possible to conceive a more magnificent or delightful prospect than London, on its first appearance, would afford to a benevolent and contemplative man, who, having lived in a state of retirement, should have formed an idea of this first City in the world (for so, with all its imperfections,



perfections, it certainly is) only from reading or conversation.

How pleasing must be his sensations, when he surveys the beautiful and capacious Thames, adorned with elegant and commodious bridges, and crouded with Ships of various nations, and contemplates the unremitted flood of wealth, which, even in times of war and national distress, it pours into the bosom of its unrivalled Capital ! Let us attend him to the Royal Exchange, where Commerce assembles her industrious votaries from every civilized nation of the globe. Thence let us proceed with him to the Bank of England, where the elegance and convenience which are united in this noble structure, though justly intitled to praise, are the most inconsiderable objects of regard; even the regularity and dispatch, with which the national business is there transacted, sinks in the comparison with that idea of opulence and security which must strike his mind, when he reflects, that " a Company of Bankers " should not only possess these superior advantages, but should support the credit of a mighty Empire unsullied, though her Debts exceed the enormous sum of *two hundred and forty Millions !*

His attention will next be attracted by the variety of public edifices, erected for the service of religion, of government, and of public amusement; many of them magnificent and elegant in a high degree. Those noble and commodious buildings, dedicated to public Charity, cannot fail to excite an involuntary transport of joy, admiration, and applause. Nor does the Capital less excel in the regularity and symmetry of domestic architecture, and the inestimable advantages of watering, lighting, and paving; which, combined, are exclusively her own. When the Capitals of other European Nations are wrapped in the gloom of night, or at best but *partially* enlightened, London shines with unrivalled splendour. Every *avenue* to the Metropolis of Britain, for Miles round, is illuminated! nor can any appearance be more astonishing and pleasing to a stranger, than that which the long, capacious, and regular, streets, and magnificent squares, at the west end of the Town, every evening display; and, in many streets, the effect of the lamps is heightened by the dazzling lustre of the shops, abounding with a profusion of all those articles which the necessity of human nature can require, or its highest luxury demand!

It is natural to suppose our recluse philosopher (having thus transiently viewed the exterior grandeur of London) would be curious to see if the same appearance of elegance and splendour, though on a more contracted scale, is to be met with in the houses of its most opulent inhabitants. Invited by the numerous train of carriages which attend at the door, the throng of splendid visitors that enter, and the sounds of joy and harmony which are heard from within, he relies on the famed hospitality of British manners to excuse his intrusion.

Passing through several rooms, adorned with the most costly furniture and elegant paintings, he enters the grand salloon, illuminated with wax tapers suspended in lustres of the highest workmanship, and reflecting colours equal to the brightest diamond. He beholds a numerous and well-dressed assembly, whose attention seems, in some measure, engaged by a concert, which intirely engrosses his own. He hears the noblest compositions of music executed in a style which only the best performers can reach, and is "all ear" till the sublime entertainment concludes. The concert is succeeded by a Ball, in which the matchless beauty of the British fair is heightened by the

elegance of dress, the blaze of jewels, and the more attractive and natural charms of placid countenances and graceful motion. When the dance has continued till pleasure approaches the confines of satiety and fatigue, a new scene of luxury is displayed, and the company are seated at a table spread with a profusion of the choicest and most costly delicacies that wealth can purchase or appetite desire.

Such are the scenes which our Philosopher may, without the least violation of probability, be supposed to behold, in London, when the ocean whitens with the furious storm, when the driving snow and rattling hail "beat dark December," and the gloom of night adds horror to the black, inclement, reign of winter. Must he not then *blefs* that happy refinement of social life, that uncommon exertion of human genius, which can thus create a terrestrial paradise amidst the war of elements? Must he not entertain the most exalted ideas of the wealth, the splendour, the *felicity*, which the inhabitants of the favoured Metropolis enjoy? He will probably carry these reflections with him from the mansion where he has been thus magnificently entertained; but he cannot form a true estimate of the comparative happiness and misery of the inhabitants of London from

from this partial view. Hitherto he has only seen its bright side ; let him quit the house of joy and festivity for the street, and he will meet with objects to excite far different ideas.

There stand the pallid, emaciated, children of poverty, shivering at the wintry blast, many of whom feel the complicated evils of hunger, cold, and pain, and whose appearance too plainly indicates this sad "variety of wretchedness." In this deplorable community of human misery, many of all ages, from the tenderest infancy to that enfeebled decrepitude which approaches "the second childishness," are to be found. Here the hardy veteran or mutilated seaman becomes the melancholy associate of those, who, by accidents or natural defects, are afflicted with similar calamities, or deprived of the light of heaven !

Look down upon these thy children with an eye of mercy, O Being of beings ! and if, in thy unfathomable wisdom, thou seest fit to afflict them *here*, may they be amply recompensed in some "kingdom of reason to come !"

Yet, large as is the number of those *real* objects of charity and compassion that are condemned to drag on a miserable existence, and to solicit  
from



from the humane that poor relief, which *perverted* laws, and parish-officers equally merciless and rapacious, refuse to afford, they are few when compared to the vicious and profligate swarm that infest the various streets of this extensive Metropolis. Among these, the mean and wily hypocrites, who conceal their idleness under the cloak of pretended disease, who cause humanity to be accounted weakness, and thus aggravate the sufferings of *real* distress, are the most infamous and contemptible; *next* in degree of guilt are the numerous tribe who live by the insidious arts of private stealing, and the more daring and destructive attempts of open robbery, unless they add murder or wanton cruelty to lawless violence, and then they undoubtedly claim the *precedence* in villany.

The most *mischievous*, though perhaps the least guilty in that impartial judgement which weighs temptations against crimes, is that numerous tribe of wretched females who subsist by common prostitution; who experience by turns the *extremes* of luxury and poverty, and whose bosoms alternately heave with the tumultuous transports of pleasure or the agonizing throbs of guilt and despair! Ill-fated votaries of delusive vice! perhaps, from your earliest infancy, by parental vanity

ty or folly, seduced by flattery or deceived by falsehood, you might, with proper education and timely warning, have escaped the fatal snare! May the *virtuous* fair, who are the brightest ornaments of the human race, and "heaven's last, best, gift to man," while they are *admonished* by your fall, spare their *too rigid* censures; let them rather regard you with an eye of *pity* than disdain; they may be happy they escaped the severe conflict, but let them not exult in an imaginary *triumph*, since, though exempt from your guilt, they *escaped* your trials.

From this transient view of the splendour, the misery, and the vice, that prevail in the Metropolis, in which no object is intentionally magnified or distorted, it is evident that the evil greatly outweighs the good; and that the former is continually increasing, while the latter is proportionably diminishing. The luxury and extravagance of the great do not even tend to *their* benefit or real happiness, though the *example* they hold forth is extremely prejudicial to the morals of the middle and lower orders of the community, and its consequences still more pernicious.

To effect a reformation of manners, or introduce a system of virtue and œconomy among the  
votaries

votaries of pleasure and the favourites of fortune; by *rational* deduction, is a hopeless and chimerical attempt. But the increasing numbers and accumulating distress of the poor are evils which *may* admit of extenuation, if not of redress; the depredations of the public and private plunderer *may* be restrained; the alarming progress of infamy and prostitution *may* be impeded.

But, before any effectual remedy can be applied to these alarming distempers in the body politic, it will be necessary to investigate their causes; and, as the vices of the numerous Poor, in the Metropolis and its environs, are most of them *effects* necessarily resulting from their Wretchedness, which exposes them to temptation, their Idleness, which renders them apt for mischief, and their Numbers, which make detection difficult and punishment precarious, — the *causes* of this Idleness and Wretchedness will be the first objects of inquiry.

The term *Poor* being comparative, and consequently indefinite, it is requisite to inform the Reader, that it is here intended to include, not only the common Beggars, whose obtrusive penury demands relief from every one whom they think will afford it, but that it also comprehends  
those

those far more numerous, and, in general, more deserving, objects of distress, whose utmost efforts are scarcely sufficient to obtain a bare subsistence, and the still more wretched victims of poverty and despair, whose sufferings and complicated wrongs are concealed in the shade of obscurity, who see no end of their misery, no prospect even of mitigation, but in the grave!

Were all the secret recesses of sorrow, which this overgrown Capital contains, to be laid open; were the relentless tyranny of masters and mistresses to those infant victims whom parochial œconomy *sells* to them for *apprentices*, and who endure every kind of oppression, to be made known; were the more unnatural barbarity of parents † to their innocent, unoffending, helpless, offspring, whom they train up to idleness and wretchedness by example, or consign to the friendly arms of death by a lingering variety of torments, to be exposed to public view, how would the *humanity* of a people, no less generous than enlightened, be shocked at the horrid spectacle!

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That

† There are frequent instances of parents selling their children, at three or four years of age, to chimney-sweepers, for five shillings a head!

That hundreds, (perhaps *thousands*;) in this populous City, are, at this moment, groaning under the load of these complicated evils, is beyond the possibility of a doubt! Will not, then, every humane Reader, nay, will not every one who regards the name of Briton, anxiously desire to know whence it happens, that, in the most free nation under heaven, in the first City of the world, these evils should arise, continue, and increase, and to inquire how they are to be redressed?

However paradoxical it may, at first sight, appear, it is undoubtedly true, that the present system of Poor-Laws, under which near three Millions are annually raised in England for the express purpose of maintaining the poor, and which were evidently intended for the wise and benevolent purposes of mitigating their distress, promoting their industry, preventing their vice, and rendering them these essential benefits with as little inconvenience as possible to the public, produce, in their operation, effects directly the reverse; and are themselves, both from a fault in their original constitution, and from their mal-administration, one principal cause of the misery, idleness, and moral turpitude, *now* so universally prevalent



prevalent among the poor, especially in the Metropolis.

By the original constitution of our Parish-Laws, every Parish is obliged to maintain the poor *which belong to it*, however distant their residence may happen to be when they become chargeable; and this is the *radical* defect from which the numerous evils complained of, and many that have not yet been adverted to, evidently and necessarily proceed.

An appeal to facts, which daily experience amply supplies, will best illustrate the truth of the above assertion. Let us first see how they operate with respect to vagrants, or common beggars, whom the poor-laws indiscriminately stigmatize as criminals, unjustly including age, sickness, and infirmity, in the opprobrium and the punishment due only to the penury which arises from *idleness*.

The usual answer, to the frequent applications for charity, which every one who walks the streets of London meets with, is, "let your parish maintain you," or, "work for your subsistence." But, though this may frequently be a very just and pertinent rebuke to the lazy and in-

solent mendicant, it is sometimes a severe wound to keen sensibility, a heavy aggravation of unmerited suffering. A person, indued with common humanity, will therefore endeavour to form some judgement respecting the state of the petitioner; and, if he appear in real distress, will rather inquire the cause of his soliciting assistance than imperiously order him to demand it of those, who will, perhaps, reject his humble suit with the unfeeling and intolerable contempt, which upstart insolence assumes from imaginary importance.

The numerous tribe of beggars may be divided into *two* classes, which, though in appearance they are nearly alike, differ widely in their real characters and intentions. The first class includes all those who solicit the contributions of the humane because they are *incapacitated* from earning their bread; the second comprehends all those who assume the mask of *pretended* infirmity and distress to conceal their idleness; and this is by far the most numerous. The former, who beg from necessity, have an undoubted *right* to be maintained at the public expence; the latter, who make it their choice, should be *compelled* to abandon it; but, notwithstanding the impolicy of suffering *any* beggars is universally allowed, and the increase of their number in the Metropolis is  
a general

a general subject of complaint, it cannot be remedied but by a reformation in our parish-laws, which, by oppressing the necessitous and encouraging the idle vagrant, augment the number of *both* classes.

So long as a beggar can *subsist*, without being burdensome to any particular parish, he is suffered to beg with impunity ; and it is a matter of indifference to the parish-officers, whose views extend no farther than the limits of their narrow districts, by *whom* he is maintained ; but, the moment he is in danger of becoming chargeable to *them*, he is regarded as a *rival*, who may lessen their share of the parish-provisions. Their sensibility is awakened by his increasing age or infirmities, and they shew the most anxious solicitude to preserve the small remains of life which want or indigence may have left him ; nothing is more shocking to them than the apprehensions of his dying — *in their parish* ; and some have even been so anxious to prevent a circumstance so distressing to their *humanity*, that they have exercised that discretionary power which the law has intrusted them with, in removing a pauper in the agonies of death, to save themselves the affliction, and their parish the expence, of burying him !!

But

Instances of this kind there *have* been, though, for the credit of human nature, it is hoped they are few. But let us suppose an *alien* to their parish compelled by sickness or infirmity to beg his bread, or ask relief from them; how is his reasonable request received? He is ordered to seek relief from his *own* parish, which may be perhaps four hundred Miles distant, or even in a different kingdom, though it is evident he is unable, by his utmost efforts, to reach the end of the street without assistance. But the law has provided him a conveyance; a Magistrate, on application, must grant him a *pass*. Will this, then, renew his strength? Certainly not; but the Magistrate is undoubtedly better qualified, than the ignorant beggar, to determine whether he be able to walk; and, if the insolent rascal dare dispute the wisdom of his worship's enlightened judgement, Bridewell is ready to receive him! *Real* distress is silent and diffident; it feels its weakness, and crouches beneath the iron hand of oppression; thus fares it with the unfortunate slave of invincible poverty! Disconsolate and abashed, he stands in the presence of "angry justice," till he is dismissed with a lecture on the clemency of his judge, who permits him, this time, to escape the punishment due to his offence, and an admonition  
to

to beware how he transgresses the law, by begging, in future. Yet he has no alternative but to subsist by charity or to starve; though he may perhaps have trained up a numerous offspring to honest industry, to be useful members of that community, by whose unequal laws, thus despotically administered, he is cruelly oppressed; or, harder still, he may behold his helpless children, whom his unremitting labour had supported, while his health remained unimpaired, doomed to experience the hard lot of *infant* indigence, and, with the faithful partner of his better days, now compelled to become his wretched associates in poverty! Far different is the fate and the disposition, of the *idle* vagrant, whose punishment would fall short of his guilt should he be made to suffer the utmost severity of the law; but begging is to *him* a profitable employment; he is skilful in the arts of dissimulation and evasion; and, conscious how justly he *deserves* punishment, he is equally dextrous and successful in the means of eluding it. — If apprehended in the exercise of his vocation, and brought before the awful tribunal of justice, he can act his part in the farce with wonderful ease and address, and even make it terminate to his advantage. Loud and querulous in his lamentations, he addresses the arbiter of justice with a dismal tale of fictitious distress; he pretends



tends to be incapable of labour, afflicted with disorders, and debilitated by the complicated ills of want and sickness ; though his firm-set limbs and hale countenance (ill concealed by the most squalid and ragged attire) give the lie to his assertions. “ There is nothing so dreadful to him” (he says) “ as being forced to beg ; and, if his “ Worship would be pleased to grant him a *pass*, “ he would endeavour to crawl to his parish, “ though at the most remote part of the kingdom, and be thankful if he could be permitted “ to end his days in a workhouse.” The humane magistrate certainly cannot refuse a request so reasonable in itself, and made with so much humility ; he is dismissed with commendation, receives his pass, and uses it as a *licence to beg* in places where his face is new, which was the favourite object of his wish ; and, when he has sufficiently gratified it, he returns to his fraternity in the Metropolis, to impose on the humanity and laugh at the credulity of those, who maintain them, not only in idleness, but in *luxury*.\*

Thus,

\* The various accounts of the nocturnal revels and feasts of beggars, at certain houses of rendezvous in different parts of London, so far as they are warranted by fact, must refer to *this* class of vagrants ; though they furnish a plausible excuse for that avaricious circumspection which prudently determines never to relieve a common beggar.

Thus, while the real objects of misery and compassion are oppressed, the counterfeits are encouraged, and the numbers of both are increased; nor is this the worst effect our present impolitic system of parish-laws produces; it extends its destructive influence to the children of both classes of beggars: those of the indolent, who support themselves by imposing on the generosity, are destined to subsist by invading the property, of the public; from their earliest infancy they are regularly and systematically trained to that species of robbery best adapted to their age. Precept, example, encouragement, and inclination, devote them to the earliest and most dextrous exploits of puerile depredation; the infant pick-pocket, as he advances to maturity, improves in his profession, and becomes an open, notorious, and daring, robber; and the *penal* laws, no less unequal and impolitic than the parochial, terminate his exploits and his existence at the Gallows. Nor can it be wondered at, if the male offspring of the *really* indigent and involuntary beggar, encouraged by the example of their vile associates, and stimulated by the resistless temptations of hunger, cold, and nakedness, should pursue the same violent and destructive course, and experience the same deplorable and untimely fate.

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The lives of the female children of the common beggars are equally abandoned, more miserable, and perhaps more *destructive* to society, than those of the males; since they are doomed to a state of existence in which guilt is inseparably united with misery; to suffer the infamy, the abuse, the diseases, the wants, the innumerable and complicated horrors, of the most abject state of prostitution! A man of common humanity cannot look on infants, destined from their birth to so severe a fate, without feeling the most tender compassion for them, and the most anxious desire to snatch them from perdition. Surely that hereditary patriotism and virtue, which are still brighter ornaments to the descendant of the illustrious Chatham than his uncommon and universally-acknowledged abilities, will induce him to attempt a speedy and effectual reformation of grievances, so alarming and so diffusive. The attempt is by no means impracticable; still less is it *beneath* his notice, or disproportionate to his powers. It would be the most noble, the most generous, exertion of patriotism, to rescue thousands from guilt and misery, who are now at once the outcasts and the *pests* of society. His efforts, in the cause of humanity, would demand not only the applause, but the assistance, of all who regard the welfare of mankind; and his popularity,

founded

founded on the solid basis of virtue and truth, could not be shaken or undermined by faction, but would increase with the industry, the prosperity, and the happiness, of Britain.

But it is time to return from this digression, which anticipates the happy period of reformation, and resume the investigation of the causes of those evils which at present prevail, and are daily increasing, among the lower orders of the people in this Metropolis.

From the consideration of the ill effects produced by the constitution and administration of the poor-laws, with respect to common beggars, it is necessary to examine their operation on that part of the community whose labour is in *general* sufficient to obtain for themselves and families the bare necessities of life, though the casual interruption to which it is liable, from sickness, from inclemency of seasons, or from other incidental causes, immediately reduces them to a state of actual want, and obliges them to ask for relief. — Let us first suppose that this circumstance happens in a parish *near* that to which they belong, or even *in* that, which is certainly the most favourable for the pauper. He applies, then, to his *own* parish-officers; he represents the cause of his pre-



sent application ; he is sober and industrious ; but he has a numerous family, and he cannot, *at present*, get any employment ; to add to his distress, his wife is on a sick bed, he is ill himself, and his children are incapable of earning any thing, or even of taking care of themselves. The parish-officers tell him, their rates are already so burdensome, the utmost they can do is to allow him 1s. 6d. or at most two shillings, per week, or take his wife and children into the workhouse till he can get employment. If he accepts this weekly pittance, (which is totally insufficient to keep *one third* of his family from starving,) he is utterly unable to provide the least spark of fire to warm them in the most inclement season, or to afford the smallest assistance to his faithful helpmate ; all he can do is, to attempt supplying the deficiency of the common necessities of life, by begging himself, (for we have supposed him honest enough to resist the temptation, I had almost said the *extenuation*, of theft,) and by subjecting his children to the same hazardous, and generally unprofitable, employment, the ill consequences of which have already been adverted to. If, of two dreadful evils, the workhouse appear the least, the many unavoidable hardships, to which himself and family must be subjected, by entering this wretched asylum of poverty and distress, make it doubtful  
whether



whether he has not made a wrong choice in this severe alternative. His wife must, in this case, be removed, though her life should be hazarded, or even *sacrificed*; if, by their former industry, they have been able to get a bed, or a few articles of household-goods, which they might call their own, these must be disposed of (however insignificant the produce) to pay for the arrears of lodging, or for debts incurred by illness; even the *implements* of his trade, or his labour, cannot be preserved till he may be again able to make use of them; for, though he might have satisfied even the most clamorous and unreasonable, by promising to pay their demands by degrees, as opportunity and ability might be afforded him, his removal to the workhouse effectually deprives him of this resource, miserable as it is; and his creditors, perhaps nearly as poor as himself, cannot support a total loss. His little property, then, is gone, and the wretched family is removed to the workhouse; himself ill, his wife dangerously so, his children weak and helpless, from the united effects of infancy, of hunger, and of cold! The law, it is confessed, obliges the parish to maintain them; but what reception are these objects of compassion likely to meet with, on entering their new habitation? The parish-officers, in whom, with the concurrence of the Vestry, the power of choosing

choosing a Governor for the workhouse is ultimately lodged, have probably made choice of a mean, unfeeling, wretch, whose strongest recommendations are the most abject obsequiousness to those above, and the most oppressive tyranny to those beneath, him. These qualifications are generally *united*, and, it is to be feared, are too congenial to the dispositions and mercenary views of *most* parish-officers to be buried in obscurity. To men, who have at once their appetites and their avarice to gratify, whose system is to unite profusion with parsimony, to rob the public by their gluttony, and diminish the poor by famine, there cannot possibly be a more convenient instrument than *such* a governor. His disposition and interest exactly coincide with the views of his masters. To lessen the number of the poor in his workhouse by ill usage, to ease the expence of their maintenance, by curtailing the quantity, and debasing the quality, of their provisions, are the maxims of his government; and, it must be acknowledged, it is a most happy expedient to gratify a malignant disposition, at the same time that it is admirably adapted to promote the social joys of conviviality; so that such governors and parish-officers, at their *economical* entertainments, may justly be said, in the words of the poet on a different occasion, to

“ mingle,

“ mingle; with the flowing bowl,  
 “ The feast of *reason* and the flow of soul.”

But *all* parish-officers are not alike mercenary, nor all governors of workhouses fraudulent and oppressive. There are doubtless *some*, and it is to be hoped there may be many, in these stations, whose conduct may not only exempt them from censure, but merit applause. Yet it ought to be remembered, that, as it is the distinguishing characteristic, it should be the primary object, of a wise and free government, to guard its subjects from *every* kind of oppression, as far as the nature of all civil regulations will admit; and that it is to little purpose to limit the power of the Prince, if the operation of a subordinate despotism, more disgraceful and more intolerable, be allowed. If the Legislature consider poverty as a *crime*, and inflict on the involuntary culprits that most severe punishment, the deprivation of liberty, (which is the case with *all* who are subsisted in workhouses,) it surely ought to define and controul the authority of their jailors, and not leave it to the fortuitous effects of disposition or caprice to determine whether their tyranny shall be mild or severe.

But,

But, admitting, in the present instance, the distressed family should be placed under a humane and upright governor; that the sick parents are treated with that lenity, and receive that assistance, their situation requires; that the children are supplied with a proper allowance of wholesome food; that the task of work assigned them is proportionate to their age and their strength; and that punishment is only inflicted on obstinacy or idleness: yet, though the poor have not, in such instances, an Egyptian task-master, they are “in the house of bondage;” and, if returning health permits this family once more to regain their liberty, how are they to subsist? — Destitute of every necessary of life, deprived even of the *implements* of labour, from what source are the immediate and urgent wants of nature to be supplied?

Yet, severe as is their lot, they have obtained relief from their parish under the most favourable circumstances that the present system of parish-laws allows. How much more unfortunate are those who are rendered incapable of supporting themselves and their families in the parish where they have hitherto earned their bread; and whose settlement is perhaps some hundreds of miles distant?

tant? If their incapacity arise from sickness, if the season be the most inclement, if they have a numerous train of children, they must, in spite of all these impediments, be removed to their parish, or rather be *transported* from that where they happen to become chargeable. If there be, in the opinion of the magistrate, a bare possibility of their attempting to proceed on foot, they (like the common beggar) are furnished with a walking-paß; this, and the very small relief they receive from the several parishes through which they travel, aided by the voluntary contributions of the humane, are the only assistances the sick parents and helpless infants can receive; and surely they are totally inadequate to the hardships and difficulties of their very arduous and fatiguing journey. But, should they be absolutely incapable of proceeding on foot, they are to be conveyed in open carts or waggons, exposed to the utmost severity of the season; and, if an expedient, so ingeniously adapted to the increase of their illness, should produce that effect, it is considered, by the officers of the different parishes, whose business it is to find them carriages, as a sufficient reason for *hastening* their journey; for, though *humanity* evidently points out the necessity of delay, that narrow policy, by which their conduct is generally actuated, informs them, that they must on no



account suffer the pauper to *die* in their parish, if there be a possibility of avoiding it, lest the expence of burial should fall on them, in case the parish to which he is removing should dispute the settlement.

We will suppose, however, (though the chances are greatly against it,) that the distressed family all survive the hardships to which their removal exposes them, and arrive at the place of their destination. They are received into the workhouse, and treated as paupers, under such circumstances, generally are. If the parents recover, they must leave their habitation as soon as their strength permit. What then are they to do for a subsistence? They are not only destitute of the implements of labour, but the manufacture, by which they have been accustomed to maintain themselves and their family, is not carried on near the place to which they have been removed, at an expence, probably, far greater than would have supported them through their illness. The only method they can pursue, then, is to leave their children in the workhouse; and obtain a pass to measure back, on foot, the journey they have been, with equal cruelty and improvidence, compelled to undertake.

Still

Still more severe is the operation of the Parish-Laws with respect to those, among the Poor, whose place of settlement is subject to doubt and litigation; and there are many totally *ignorant* of the parish to which they belong, who can have no possible resource but *begging*, since the law affords them no relief till it can be proved what parish is obliged to maintain them; and the *onus probandi*, thus arbitrarily imposed on the parties wanting relief, may be, and very frequently *must* be, an insuperable objection to their obtaining it. With respect to aliens, children, idiots, or lunatics, the absolute *impossibility* of proving *any* settlement, by oath, is self-evident; though, it must be allowed, the very circumstances, which disqualify them from receiving relief, would be, to the generous and humane, the strongest arguments for affording it.

With all such, the many hardships which necessarily and inevitably result to the poor from that original and capital defect in our parochial jurisprudence, which intails the maintenance of the poor on the parish where their settlement can be established, and which have been already enumerated, cannot fail to have due weight. Though, on the other hand, there are many who would doubtless be averse to any alteration in the present

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system,

system, on the supposition that it is the least burdensome to the public of any that can be devised ; but, if this opinion be founded in error, and it can be proved that the *reverse* is demonstrably true, even these enemies to reformation must give up this objection, and concur with the more generous and liberal-minded, though on very different principles, in admitting the expediency of a reform. The remedy, to the grievance here complained of, is obvious ; and would effectually remove the evils immediately resulting from it to the poor, at the same time that it would, instead of increasing, greatly *diminish*, the national burden of their maintenance, and be productive of effects still more beneficial.

If every parish were obliged to maintain the poor that *live in it*, whenever they became chargeable, all the complicated hardships, which have been shewn to result from vexatious, hazardous, and frequently inhuman, removals, would not only be for ever abolished, but the most beneficial consequences would ensue to the public at large from this salutary alteration. It would, in the first instance, save all those sums annually expended in the litigation of settlements, and in those removals by riding-passes, for which, besides the subsistence of the paupers on the journey,

carriages

carriages and horses are to be provided, not only for them, but for the parish-officers or constables that attend them. It would render these offices by far less troublesome to those who might be *constrained* to execute them without any indirect view to private emolument, and less lucrative to those of different principles. Another very beneficial consequence, resulting from this regulation, would be the *immediate* diminution of the number of beggars; since those, who, having now *no* settlement, or other means of support, are obliged to subsist on charity, must be provided for by the parish of their residence, while the voluntary beggar would be compelled to earn by labour that livelihood he now obtains by imposition or by open robbery. Thus the public might, in a short time, be intirely relieved from the *whole tribe* of mendicants, which are at once a nuisance, a burden, and a disgrace, to any well-regulated society.

It is by no means an improbable supposition, that, in a twelvemonth after this regulation, there would not be a single beggar of the *second* class in the streets of London. For, every parish being obliged to maintain its *own* poor, and every *inhabitant* being a parishioner, it is evident, that the first effort of parochial oeconomy would  
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be to permit no beggars to inhabit it who were capable of working for their living ; and it would make them regard the *manners* of the common people with the most vigilant attention, well knowing that, if the parents be idle, or, which is still worse, if they spend in drink the produce of their labour, by which their families should be supported, the parish where they *live* must maintain them.

It is evident, that the rapid and alarming increase of robberies, in and near the Metropolis, is to be attributed, in a great measure, to the idleness and immorality of the lower class of its inhabitants ; and it is equally true, that this proposed alteration of the poor-laws would operate as an effectual remedy to both ; since it would be no less the interest than the duty of the parish-officers to encourage honesty and sobriety, and to restrain (if they cannot entirely eradicate) the opposite vices.

But, it may be said, there is one very strong objection to this projected amendment in our parish-laws ; for it would bear extremely hard on *particular* parishes, who would find the increase of their poor, in consequence of it, an intolerable burden. This objection is obvious and forcible ;



ble ; it would therefore be incumbent on the legislature, if possible, to remove it ; yet, if it should be admitted that this cannot be effected, it ought to be considered, that the *general* good would much more than compensate for the partial evil ; and, whenever this is demonstrably the fact, the maxim of “ *salus populi suprema lex*” ought undoubtedly to be adhered to.

It does not, however, appear, that the present objection, though the only one of any weight that can be urged against this plan of reformation, is, by any means, *insuperable*. On the contrary, there are many expedients by which it might be obviated : it may be sufficient here to mention the two following. 1st. Instead of passing the pauper to the place of his settlement, when he becomes chargeable, let him be relieved in the parish of which he is an inhabitant ; and, if it can be proved that he has in reality gained a settlement in some distant parish, let the charge of relieving him be *repaid* by the officers of the parish to which he belongs. In this case, the expence and inconvenience of *removals* would be prevented, and the burden of relieving the pauper would *still* fall ultimately on the parish of his legal settlement, in case any such could be proved ; and, if it could not, the place where he resides would

would be bound by law, as it certainly is by equity, to support him.

But, though this would, as far as it might extend, be a very beneficial alteration with respect to the poor, and a considerable reduction of expence to the public, it would still leave the former exposed to the tyranny, and the latter to the speculation, of oppressive and rapacious parish-officers.

A mode of redress, therefore, more effectually comprehensive and operative, which would reach the source of the evils, and remedy every defect in our present system of parish-laws, at the same time that it would obviate any material objection to an alteration, is surely more eligible than a *partial* plan of reform.

Let it then be supposed,

2dly, That the *aggregate* fund of the national poor's rates should be collected from the different parishes exactly in the same manner, and in the same ratio, that it now is, or has been on an average of any given number of years, (if that precaution should be thought essential to the preservation of a due proportion,) and paid into the public

public treasury, to be expended in the annual maintenance of the poor, in such a manner, and by such persons, as the wisdom of the legislature shall appoint. By this means, a considerable advantage would accrue to the public, as the scandalous and iniquitous custom of parish-feasts would be intirely abolished, and the league of oppression and peculation, which at present subsists between mercenary and tyrannical parish-officers and governors of workhouses, would be dissolved. Government, therefore, would not only be enabled, from the money thus saved, to allow reasonable salaries to the persons entrusted with the care and maintenance of the poor; but the residue, which would undoubtedly be very considerable, might be appropriated as a fund for the future reduction of the rates, for building workhouses for the maintenance of children deserted or ill-treated by their parents, or deprived of them by the sentence of the laws; or for other purposes of national benefit.

On a moderate calculation, it may be computed, that at least one eighth part of the immense sum, annually levied on the inhabitants of London and its environs for the maintenance of the poor, is expended in feasting the Collectors and their adherents, and other misapplications and

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impositions

impositions to which the public is liable; for heavy and arbitrary fines are levied on those, who, disdaining to abet a species of robbery they are unable to prevent, refuse to serve with such unworthy colleagues. Parish-offices are usually performed by a junto of mercenary tradesmen and mechanics, who, not content with expending the money, with which they are entrusted, in their luxurious and extravagant entertainments, make it the principal business of those meetings to contrive unnecessary plans of parochial expence, of which themselves are to be the projectors, the comptrollers, the operators, and the paymasters.

To those, who think this estimate of parochial gluttony and imposition too high, the following fact, which can be established by incontestible evidence, is submitted by way of apology. The writer is credibly informed, that, in a parish not many miles from London, the inhabitants paid, in the year 1783, as a composition for repairing the Highways, upwards of 120*l.* of which sum, 75*l.* were *proved* to have been spent in different entertainments, at the same time that some of the roads in that parish were not only impassable, but a nuisance to the inhabitants who had houses contiguous to them, and who paid their part of the composition. But then the reader is requested to remember,

remember, that these were not *highways*, but by-ways ; and therefore it could not be supposed the Surveyors would make a *misapplication* of the public money by laying out any part of it in mending them.

If to this regular and wanton profusion of expence are added the incidental charges of removals, litigations, embezzlements, insolence of collectors, all which frequently happen, it is by no means improbable, that one fourth part of the poor's rates is diverted from the purpose for which it is raised ; and, while the poor, for whose maintenance and support the humanity of the Legislature solely intended it, are thus basely defrauded of their right ; are constrained to beg, if at liberty, or to be imprisoned if relieved ; nay, while they are perhaps publicly exposed, by their unjust and merciless stewards, to be *enslaved and starved by proxy*, parish meetings, jobs, and feasts, are multiplied in a rapid succession. The shameful advertisements, which frequently disgrace our newspapers, offering the poor of a whole parish to be maintained by *contract*, and inviting the lowest bidder to *farm* them, can be considered in no better light, and deserve no milder appellation, than is here afforded them.



Such are the consequences resulting from a system defective in its constitution, and corrupt in its administration, by which, while the poor are oppressed, the public is defrauded. These surely are intolerable grievances, and demand immediate and effectual redress; which might undoubtedly be obtained, if the maintenance and management of the poor were vested in persons appointed by the Legislature, and immediately accountable to Parliament and to the public for the disposal of the property, and the exercise of the power, with which they are entrusted.

In what manner this plan may be most eligibly carried into execution, the wisdom of the great council of the nation is certainly competent to determine. The urgent necessity of a reformation, and the expediency and efficacy of the proposed remedy, are equally obvious; but interest or prejudice may be apt to object, that it would throw an additional weight of power and revenue into the hands of government. That it *might* do so is readily acknowledged; but does it follow that the measure is therefore dangerous and impolitic? By no means. It is, on the contrary, an occasion which not barely justifies, but demands, that the hands of government should be strengthened, and  
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its authority forcibly exerted ; since it is to effect the purpose for which alone the delegation of power ought to be confided by a free people to their governors ; it is to rescue the poor from fraud and oppression ; and, by restoring *liberty* to that most respectable rank of the community, in which the strength, the wealth, the prosperity, of a nation ultimately resides, to promote the general good. Corrupt indeed must be the government which is unworthy to be intrusted with power for so noble a purpose ! unreasonably jealous the people, who will not allow their governors the ability to do them service !

But this reform is not the only one requisite for the relief and amendment of the poor ; since there are *other* causes, no less hostile to their happiness and their morality, which are so intimately connected, that whatever destroys the former necessarily injures the latter. Adversity may be profitable to an *enlightened* mind, by inculcating the precepts of humility and resignation, and inspiring a just contempt for those objects on which the ambition or avarice of man is too often wholly intent, though he cannot insure their possession a moment.

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But the distress of the poor, when it is magnified into actual want of common necessities, is too powerful for human nature, unassisted by religion or philosophy, to support, and must terminate in guilt or despair. Stimulated by the cravings of want, enfeebled by suffering, and assailed by temptations which even the strongest virtue would be unable to resist, how is it possible their *untutored* minds can sustain the unequal conflict? — Reflect on these trials, humane and generous countrymen! when you sit in judgement on a wretched culprit, who is brought before your tribunal for a crime which *you* never could be *tempted* to commit; which *he*, perhaps, in your circumstances, would have regarded with horror! — Conceive yourselves (for a few moments) in the situation of the unfortunate criminal at your bar; forget not the temptation in your detestation of the crime, but weigh *both* in the balance; and, if justice pronounce them *equal*, let mercy turn the scale. Let that glorious humanity, which is the characteristic of an English Jury, moderate the rigour of our unequal and sanguinary penal laws; nor doom the wretch, who, perhaps to save a child, a wife, or parent, from perishing with famine, was tempted to the violation of property for which he is arraigned, to the same severe  
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and ignominious death which is inflicted on the cruel, deliberate, murderer !

The prevention of crimes, the security of life and property, the preservation of order, and the general benefit of the community, should be the *sole* ends, as they are the only justifications, of *human* punishments ; what excuse, then, can there be for the continuance of a system which counteracts *every one* of these purposes ?

That it actually *multiplies* crimes is evident from the alarming increase of robberies and of public executions ; and that it necessarily *must* have this effect will be equally apparent to any one who attentively and impartially considers its operation. Nay, even in its first act, it contradicts the humane and just maxim, which it *professes* to hold sacred, — “ that, by the laws of “ England, every man is to be accounted *innocent* till he has been proved guilty.” No sooner is a person *suspected* of guilt, than he is made to feel the rigour of our penal laws, which, at the same instant, pronounce him innocent and treat him as a criminal ! Suspicion, frequently unjust or causeless, justifies imprisonment ; and punishment, always *antedated*, is often misapplied. It is true, there are some accusations which admit  
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of bail ; but in these, as in almost every other instance, the weight of the law falls (with impolitic partiality) heaviest on that order of the community which is least able to sustain it. The man of property, whose *time* is of *little* value, either to himself or to the public, compared with his whose *only* wealth is his manual labour, by which perhaps he supports a numerous family, can easily find bail, if the crime of which he is accused be bailable : but who will be security for the forlorn wretch, whose *poverty* perhaps affords the strongest presumption of his guilt ? The man of property has various means to mitigate the severity of imprisonment, if such should be his lot ; he can procure a sufficiency of the necessities, and even luxuries, of life ; he can indulge himself in the calmness of retirement, or enjoy the society of his acquaintance. How different the fate of the *poor* man under a similar accusation ! Let us suppose both to be taken up on suspicion of a capital crime. They are examined by the sitting magistrates ; and, if circumstances appear unfavourable, they are fully committed for trial, though they are *both* to be accounted *innocent* till the event is determined by the verdict of a jury.

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Thus far their cases are parallel ; but here the equality ends. In the house of woe, as in the realms of bliss, there are " many mansions ; " and, while the preponderancy of wealth will secure to its owner the possession of the best, with the concomitant privileges above enumerated, the child of poverty is loaded with fetters, and, notwithstanding his *supposed* innocence, condemned to suffer the severe and accumulated horrors of imprisonment, penury, and pain ; and to abide with the *vilest felons*, wretches whom custom has inured to wickedness, whose guilt has already been *proved* ; and who fill up the dreadful interval, between condemnation and execution, with scenes of intoxication, blasphemy, or phrensy ! Surely such " evil communication " is more than sufficient to corrupt the " good manners " of the London poor.

But the awful day of trial approaches ; and the rich and poor man are brought from the same prison, where they experienced treatment so widely different, to be placed once more in that impartial situation, which each is, in reason and justice, equally intitled to demand. *Both* are put to the bar ; *both* are to be allowed that glorious and exclusive privilege of Englishmen, a fair and public

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trial, in which their accusers are obliged to meet them face to face, and their judgement is to be awarded by a jury of their peers ! Nor is this all the indulgence which the British legislature allows even the *meanest* of its subjects ; for, the poor man, as well as the rich, has the benefit of an advocate to plead his cause ; the only disparity here is, that the wealth of the latter can procure a *number* of counsellors, and those too of the most distinguished abilities, while the poor can only stimulate the powers of his advocate by his distress ; nor is he able to offer him a more tempting fee than the sensation which will spontaneously arise, in a susceptible mind, from the consciousness of having done a humane or generous action. But, to the honour of our country, be it remembered, a British Counsellor cannot receive a higher gratification ; nor can even wealth, though it may procure a superior number of advocates, inspire that genuine and ardent zeal, which has, on many recent occasions, inflamed the breasts of our most distinguished pleaders, when engaged in the glorious cause of oppressed or unprotected innocence.

Should the issue of the trial terminate in the establishment of the innocence, and consequent acquittal, of the prisoners at the bar, they have an undoubted right to receive from the legislature  
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the most *ample redress* for the wrong it has done them *both*, in the unmerited punishments it has inflicted on them; though it is absolutely impossible it can make even the man of property, whose injuries have been *trifling* when compared to those of his wretched fellow-prisoner, full and adequate reparation; it cannot even restore either of them to the state from which it took them, nor erase from their characters that foul and indelible disgrace of an ignominious imprisonment and public trial for a capital offence.

But light indeed have been the sufferings, trivial will be the inconveniences, of the *former*, when compared to those sustained by the latter, and extending their baleful influence to his still more wretched family. That wealth, which mitigated the hardships of confinement, will, in a short time, restore its owner his accustomed indulgences; and, though it cannot remove the blot from his reputation, it will not fail to ensure him *general* respect, and at the same time enable him to disregard or despise unjust or malevolent reproach. His family, too, relieved from that mental anxiety, which, however great, was the only inconvenience *they* suffered from his imprisonment and trial, will be amply repaid in the inexpressible delight of receiving him again, tri-

umphant over his unjust accusers, *uninjured* in his health, *uncorrupted* in his principles. Far different, alas ! will be the *acquittal* of his hapless fellow-sufferer, and the fate of his more miserable family. *He* is indeed restored to liberty, (if he can satisfy the most exorbitant and iniquitous demands of his inexorable jailor !!) but this blessing, inestimable as he formerly accounted it, is now perhaps only an aggravation of his distress. " A bitter change ; severer for severe ! " Impaired in his constitution by the hardships of confinement, the weight of his fetters, the want of wholesome food and raiment, and the noxious effluvia of a jail ; his morals contaminated, if not totally corrupted, by the still more contagious example and conversation of the prisoners ; his character, on which, no less than his manual labour, his former subsistence perhaps *depended*, now intirely and irrecoverably lost ; can *any* human being be rendered more completely, more *undeservedly*, miserable ? Look on his *wretched* wife and *starving* children, and you will there find objects, if possible, *still more* worthy of compassion, because equally distressed, though far more innocent !

What must be the anguish of the unhappy wife, the frantic mother, when first cruelly deprived of the head, the protector, the *only* human support,

support, of herself and her helpless offspring! — How must her agonies increase with their multiplied and importunate wants, and her decreasing ability to supply them? Who can paint her heart-rending woe, when the dreadful day arrives that is to determine her husband's fate? — This conflict is, however, past; he is *acquitted*! A transient gleam of joy, lively and inexpressible as her former grief, pervades her soul; she flies to embrace her long-lost husband, and fondly hopes her sorrows are at an end. But, alas! they are *only* beginning! instead of that faithful *partner* whom she before possessed, whose affection for his family was her comfort, and whose industry was their never-failing support, she now receives a wretch, emaciated by sickness, polluted with guilt, estranged from the former objects of his regard, and himself imperiously demanding that assistance which *his* situation, no less than that of his unhappy family, requires.

Destitute alike of industry, of ability, and of character, to pursue his former course of life, he avails himself of the first opportunity which returning health affords him to practise those *lessons* his *late* associates have taught him; probably he may meet with some of his prison-companions, renew the acquaintance, partake their crimes,  
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and terminate his wretched existence at the gallows !

Such is, too frequently, the effect of our penal laws on those who were *found* innocent, and might have remained so, had not an unjust accusation, and a most cruel and impolitic confinement, involved them in misery and betrayed them into guilt ! But, it is too much to be feared, the mischief, great as it is, does not cease with the existence of the unfortunate *individual*, but descends, with increasing weight and multiplied malignity, on his wretched family !

These are *truly* national grievances, equally important, extensive, and alarming ! and, it is to be hoped, when parliamentary business of more ostensible importance is finished, the wisdom of the Legislature will advert to *inferior political objects*.

Remedies for these evils (which have been shewn to arise from the operation of our penal laws even on the *innocent*) are not hard to be found nor difficult in practice ; and, before the farther bad consequences and injustice of the laws, respecting criminals, and the public in general, is considered, it may not be improper  
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humbly to suggest the following expedients to the consideration of the Legislature, though it is by no means asserted they are the *only* ones, or even the *best*, that can be adopted.

From the moment that a man, who subsists himself and family by labour, is apprehended on a criminal accusation, to the time of his acquittal, the Legislature are *bound*, no less by equity than good policy, to maintain that family whom they have thus *bereaved* of their proper and natural support.

It is undoubtedly *necessary* that the party accused should forfeit his liberty till he can be brought to trial; and inevitable necessity is the *only* excuse that can be alleged for depriving *any* British Subject of his Liberty. But this man is not confined for punishment, (which would be *tyranny*, as he is *innocent* till convicted,) but for *security* that he shall be forth coming at the day of trial. A proper place ought therefore to be provided, where all, who are accused of crimes that admit not of *bail*, should be detained. This place should have every convenience of air and cleanliness that can be obtained, and should only resemble the prisons of convicts in its *security*. Its inhabitants should be maintained here, at the  
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public expence, in a manner suitable to their different ranks. Their friends should have liberty to visit them, and even to send them any refreshments they might think proper, provided all kind of spirituous liquors be intirely prohibited, that there be nothing in the nature of the accusation to render this access *improper*, and that it be only permitted in presence of the keeper or his officers.

If it appear, on trial, that the party accused is not only innocent of the crime laid to his charge, but that he is a sober and industrious man, his acquittal should be accompanied with the strongest *testimonials* of his good character and behaviour while under confinement; he should receive a *due* recompence for his loss of time and deprivation of liberty; and, in fine, he should, if possible, be restored to his family at least in as *good* a state, respecting his circumstances, his health, and his morals, as he was previous to his accusation.

In this case, the legislature would discharge their duty to the public, as well as to the individual; (for that Government, which denies protection or redress to the lowest of its subjects, is *deficient* in its duty to *both*;) the course of *justice*, far from being impeded, would be accelerated  
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and extended by the regulations above proposed ; since it would reach not only the guilty convict, but the innocent man wrongfully accused, who certainly has the strongest right to demand it from a *free* Government, whose laws he has *not* disobeyed. But it is no less the *interest* than the duty of the Legislature to adopt a plan similar to this ; since it would evidently be productive of the most salutary effects, and, so far as it prevented the increase of criminals, would preclude the frequency of punishment, which it is incumbent on all free and wise Governments, as much as possible, to avoid.

This last consideration naturally leads to the next object of enquiry, which is the operation of our penal laws with respect to *criminals*, or those who are *justly* accused, and proved guilty, of the offences laid to their charge.

That all punishments are intended to operate as *preventions*, — that they ought to be inflicted in terror, not in anger,—for example, not revenge,—and that they should bear a due *proportion* to the crime they are designed to prevent, — are maxims universally assented to.

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If they fall far short of this proportion; they may be too lenient to produce the desired effect; but, when they too much *exceed* it, they degenerate into tyranny, and are *themselves* a greater evil than they are intended to restrain.

Capital punishments should be inflicted with the utmost reserve and the greatest solemnity; since it is evident, both from reason and experience, that their frequent and indiscriminate use intirely counteracts their design; for, by rendering them familiar to the eyes of the people, their *monitory* effect is utterly destroyed. It is, besides, a question that may admit of debate, whether society has a right, on the principles of reason and equity, to deprive any of its members of life, except he be guilty of Murder actually committed, or evidently premeditated, in which cases it would have an indubitable right, not only to punish with death, but to exercise the *lex talionis*, if the perpetration of the horrid deed be attended with circumstances of wanton cruelty. Such examples of severe retaliation would not only be strictly just, but, as they would leave a strong and lasting impression on the minds of the spectators, would fully answer the end for which alone capital punishments were designed, by exhibiting a spectacle of awful  
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and just *retribution*. As they are inflicted by our unequal laws, capital punishments not only fail to answer their intended purpose, but produce effects diametrically opposite.

Frequent, numerous, and *indiscriminate*, executions, for crimes in their degree of enormity *totally different*, are so far from operating as examples of public *justice*, that they are, *themselves*, manifest and direct violations of it. What veneration can any man, of common understanding, retain for a system which so totally disregards the proportion of punishments to crimes as to inflict the same sentence on a wretch who, perhaps, excited by temptations too strong for the frailty of human nature to resist, steals a trifling sum of money, that it judges sufficiently severe for the diabolical barbarity of a Brownrig or a Higson! Is it not demonstrably evident, that *hanging* is cruelty to the thief, and *indulgence* to the murderer? Is it not, then, equally contradictory to reason and justice, to be inexorably severe to the *less*, and compassionately lenient to the *greater*, crime?

But the mildness of our laws, it may be said, admits not of *cruel* punishments; their utmost aim is to cut off from society a corrupt or useless

member, but they forbear to add torture to the act which deprives him of existence. Principles founded in mercy should always be duly respected by the humane ; yet, where criminals have exercised the most unrelenting and deliberate cruelty on the unhappy victims of their unprovoked malice, it ought to be considered, that mercy, to such atrocious offenders, (who have shewn none themselves,) may be cruelty to *many*, who may hereafter be in the power of wretches equally inhuman.

Our penal laws, therefore, alike unjust in their clemency and their severity, have a manifest, though undesigned, tendency to *increase* those acts of barbarity which they do not attempt to restrain by a severe *retaliation* of punishment. Is it not also to be feared, that, while they attempt to prevent robbery by capital punishment, they may induce offenders to commit a much *greater* crime, which suggests a more rational probability of concealment or escape, without risking a severer condemnation, if discovered ?

If it could only be proved that capital punishments do not prevent, or even restrain, robbery, there would not be a plausible excuse for their continuance. But, if it is demonstrably evident, that,

that, instead of abating, they actually *increase*, this evil, it is not barely just and politic in the Legislature to adopt a different mode of punishment, but it is absolutely necessary the present destructive and sanguinary system of penal laws should be abolished ; since its continuance, under such circumstances, can only be attributed to negligence, obstinacy, or tyranny !

When capital punishments are inflicted for any crime short of murder, as for burglary, where the peaceable inhabitant is invaded in that asylum which the law itself deems sacred and inviolable, and the attack is made in the hour of unsuspecting security and repose, and where *murder* is the *probable* consequence of resistance, the enormity of the crime justifies the severity of the sentence. In all cases of forgery, though the degree of guilt is by no means so great, the *security* of public credit, which is the animating principle of a free and commercial state, demands a punishment severe and *exemplary*.

But, from the number and frequency of our public executions, and the indiscriminate use that is made of them, the people, in general, consider them merely as spectacles to gratify idle curiosity ; even the unhappy culprits regard their approach-  
ing

ing fate with stupid indifference, till perhaps the concluding scene awakens their sensibility ; but the impression on the minds of the spectators scarcely survives the duration of the awful catastrophe. However lightly a giddy multitude may regard such tragic scenes, no man of reflection or sensibility could see *twenty* of his fellow-creatures, at a late execution, untimely cut off from society, in the prime of life, and sent to their final audit " with all their imperfections on their heads," without being equally shocked with the severity, and disgusted with the injustice and impolicy, of our penal laws ! On such occasions, a benevolent and contemplative mind, hurt by the absurdity and the rigour of human institutions, looks up for consolation to the infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Mercy, of God.

But these legal *massacres*, cruel and unprofitable as experience proves them to be, are productive of consequences extensively pernicious to the community. *Criminals* are indeed destroyed ; but the blood, thus inconsiderately shed, like that of the fabulous Hydra, produces a new race of offenders, multiplies crimes, and increases the number of executions,

That

That such is the fact is too evident to require demonstration or admit of doubt. That it cannot, according to the present state of our penal laws, possibly be *otherwise*, is equally true. For, while they rigorously punish the most *trivial* species of robbery with death, they admit the evidence of accomplices, confessedly not *less* guilty, probably often much *more* guilty, than the criminal at the bar, to convict him; and, lest the assurance of pardon should not be a sufficient inducement for a partaker, perhaps an *instigator*, of the crime, to swear away the life of his associate in guilt, they encourage the alacrity of this treacherous and interested evidence by the irresistible, and surely, in such a case, unnecessary, *stimulation* of a considerable reward! What is this, but exposing innocence to danger, and offering protection to *villany*? What is it, but saying to the guilty evidence, in terms too plain to be misconstrued, too advantageous to be rejected, “ We know you have been guilty of a crime, for which, in our own opinion, you *deserve* to be hanged; you have committed a robbery; the sum you stole, perhaps, was trifling, but that alters not the nature of the offence. Recollect yourself, however; had you not some companions in this business? If you will swear to

“ any,



“ any, or to all, of them, you shall be pardon-  
 “ ed ; but this is not all ; for, if *any* of them  
 “ should be *hanged* in consequence of your evi-  
 “ dence, you shall be handsomely rewarded, and,  
 “ the more you convict, the greater will be your  
 “ gain.”

It is by no means intended to insinuate, that such would be the language of our judges or our counsellors to an accomplice-evidence ; so far from it, that it is *their* invariable practice to give all the indulgence they possibly can to the culprit ; this *just* tribute of praise is due to their humanity and their understanding. All that mildness of *administration* can possibly do, to abate the severity of our rigorous system of penal laws, is *always* done ; and this laudable conduct, though a tacit, is a very strong and unequivocal, *condemnation* of the system which they thus endeavour to meliorate, and which, in effect, speaks, to the *accomplice-evidence*, the language above expressed.

The impression it must make on *his* heart, dead to every impulse but that of self-interest, is easy to be conceived ; and, should he communicate his ideas to any associate he might deem worthy his confidence, he would probably address him in the following manner : “ I have risked my life in  
 “ an

“ an attempt from which I expected little, and  
 “ have acquired still less. Far from being dis-  
 “ couraged by what some affect to call the *guilt*  
 “ of robbery, I should have been equally ready  
 “ to have murdered, if I had thought it condu-  
 “ cive to my interest or my safety ; since, at the  
 “ worst, I could but have been *hanged*. But  
 “ these enterprizes are always hazardous, and sel-  
 “ dom profitable ; let us play a securer, and at  
 “ the same time, a more advantageous, game.  
 “ We are both acquainted with a number of  
 “ thoughtless, idle, extravagant, young fellows,  
 “ who pretend to no virtue but *courage*, which  
 “ renders them still more subservient to our inte-  
 “ rest. Invited by the appearance of danger,  
 “ and eager to signalise themselves by an exploit  
 “ which will gratify their vanity, while it promi-  
 “ ses indulgence to the insatiable avarice of un-  
 “ bounded prodigality, they will readily engage  
 “ in our plan. Let us, then, from these, select  
 “ each of us a chosen band, while, like skilful  
 “ generals, we secure a retreat, which the law has  
 “ happily, if not wisely, provided for us. —  
 “ While we can *all* reign triumphant, let us, like  
 “ men of honour and votaries of pleasure, share  
 “ and enjoy the spoil ; if we are defeated, let pro-  
 “ fit and security atone for the breach of confi-  
 “ dence. By betraying our confederates, we

“ not only preserve, but enrich, ourselves. Be-  
 “ sides, if we judge it expedient to go on a  
 “ *private* adventure, we can easily impeach an  
 “ *accomplice*, no matter whether present or absent.  
 “ We, *whose trade is robbery and murder*, cer-  
 “ tainly have no objection to *perjury*. The *truth*  
 “ of our evidence is, to us, of no consequence,  
 “ provided we take care it shall be corroborated  
 “ by strong and probable appearances; other-  
 “ wise, judges and counsellors have so little defe-  
 “ rence for our honour and veracity, and English  
 “ Juries are so strangely prepossessed with notions  
 “ of humanity and mercy, that, in spite of the  
 “ advantages we derive from the *Law itself*, we  
 “ shall find it extremely difficult to convict *inno-*  
 “ *cent* persons. This, therefore, must be our  
 “ last resource, since it is a much surer and easier  
 “ method to rob in company; and it is more  
 “ profitable too; for, if we meet with no success,  
 “ we can but impeach some of our *real* accom-  
 “ plices; and, the more we convict, the better.  
 “ We are always sure of raising *new* recruits,  
 “ which are fitter for our purpose than vete-  
 “ rans.”

That such diabolical principles have been fre-  
 quently reduced to practice is evident from the  
 examples of many whose villany has been detected  
 and

and punished. But, it is much to be feared, the number of these bears no proportion to that of the miscreants who escape with impunity. Be that as it may, it is certain that the *indemnity* which the law holds forth to accomplices endangers the lives of innocent men, and the *reward* not only encourages, but *creates*, criminals, and is one great cause of the alarming increase in the number of robberies.

Another, perhaps still more powerful and extensive in its operation, is the total disregard of the unhappy widows and orphans of those wretches who die by the sentence of the law! What can be more unjust, impolitic, or inhuman! — When twenty criminals were lately hanged at once, it is probable twice that number were *destined* to future execution, if the present system of sanguinary punishment be not abolished. The widows and children of these convicts, though supported by the wages of iniquity, are perhaps innocent themselves; the *infants* are certainly so. But how should they possibly continue in that state? Neglected by that society whose laws have bereft them of their support, to whom should they apply for subsistence but to the *associates* of their late unhappy parents? And by these they *will* be received and maintained, and instructed

in the early rudiments of that calling by which they are in future to be supported. Thieving is now become a *science* ; and, no sooner are these outcasts of the community arrived at an age to be capable of distinguishing good from evil, than they are systematically trained up to it by the most industrious and able proficient. Other trades require a long apprenticeship, and many years to be spent in a previous education ; but, in this, no such preparatory instructions are necessary. The human mind, uncultivated and neglected, is too prone to imbibe the principles of idleness and vice ; and experience fatally proves, that the precepts of virtue and morality, inculcated by instruction, enforced by authority, and recommended by example, are often insufficient to restrain these evil propensities. How, then, should a *child*, fostered by the vilest of the human race, inured to wickedness from its first dawn of reason, educated in a *state of war* with virtue and society, and taught to consider every honest man as its enemy, and his property as its prize, escape the snares, or avoid the punishment, of vice ? The progress of such a being, in the precipitate path of guilt, must be rapid, violent, and dangerous. Injurious to his fellow-creatures, and destructive to himself, he is at once an object of horror and of compassion ! For, every man of common hu-  
manity



manity must commiserate the severe lot of a wretch thus *devoted*, from his *birth*, to infamy and ruin ! Let us take a transient view of his existence, from the cradle to the gallows, and we shall be convinced that he is unjustly and inevitably sacrificed by our impolitic laws, which “ visit “ the sins of the fathers upon the children,” whom, even from their tenderest infancy, they consign to guilt and devote to punishment !

Long before other children have finished the common school-education, to fit them for their employment, this unhappy orphan is an *adept* in his profession ; before his equals in age can read a lesson with tolerable fluency, the infant thief can pick a pocket with wonderful dexterity ; and the transition, from this beginning to higher exploits, is rapid and easy.

It is probable he could not long pursue this course of violence and rapine without being detected and punished ; but the mode of punishment lately adopted by the Legislature, far from answering its intention of *reforming* offenders by suffering, or warning them by example, only *bardens* them in their crimes.

This

This youth, we will suppose, is convicted of a theft, for which he is sentenced to a year's labour and confinement in the Ballast-Lighters. It must be owned our penal laws, however impolitic, are, in this instance, perfectly *consistent*. For, as the convict was, from his earliest infancy, destined to the profession of robbery, nothing could possibly be conceived more proper to *complete* his education, and make him master of the science, than such an University!

In this seminary he meets with professors of every class to instruct him; and he must be incorrigibly dull if he do not, at the expiration of the twelvemonth, come forth a skilful, daring, and determined, villain! Thus he proceeds, in an undeviating course of wickedness, till an ignominious and untimely death stops his destructive career. How dreadful is the reflection, that, by this most absurd and dangerous mode of punishment, *hundreds* of robbers, equally mischievous and abandoned as this, are *annually* let loose to prey on the community; and that the property, the houses, the lives, of the inhabitants of the Metropolis and its extensive environs, are continually exposed to their alarming and destructive inroads! Robbers *now* add wanton barbarity to lawless

lawless violence ; not contented with plundering, they frequently wound or mutilate, those whom they are able to overcome, in the most shocking manner, if they attempt to defend themselves ; and instances of this kind are now become common, even when no resistance is made. It is remarkable that these acts of cruelty have been multiplied to a most alarming degree since the punishment of the Ballast-Lighters has been adopted ; and it is no less true that the number of robberies has been continually, and is now rapidly, increasing. Both these grievances are in a great measure to be attributed to this mode of punishment ; since the “ evil communication ” of such daring offenders hardens them in their wickedness, at the same time that it sharpens their inventions, and suggests more daring and extensive plans of mischief ; and their confinement exasperates their minds, adds subtilty and refinement to cruelty, and prompts them to revenge on society the indignity and punishment its laws have inflicted on them.

Having considered the effect of our penal laws, from their operation on those, whom, though they deem innocent, they yet severely injure and oppress, to the preparatory punishments and final execution of those whom they convict, — and  
 shewn,

shewn, that, in their various gradations, they uniformly and necessarily contribute to the *increase* of those crimes and enormities they were intended to prevent,—it will not, surely, be deemed impertinent to suggest some *hints* towards the establishment of a system more consonant to the unalterable principles of justice, and better calculated to secure the rights of society, and extend the influence of humanity; submitting them to the candid and impartial judgement of the public, though by no means presuming to convey them in the obtrusive style of dogmatical impertinence.

Reformation is by no means so easy in practice as it appears in theory; since those plans, which are esteemed, by the sanguine projector, models of perfection, may, when thoroughly examined by more accurate and impartial enquirers, or when actually submitted to the infallible test of experience, be found liable to various objections.

To discover the defects in any system of human invention, especially in one so complex and so imperfect as that of our penal laws, is extremely easy; yet to apply adequate and certain remedies, to all these defects, is, perhaps, no less difficult. But, though it be admitted, that no plan  
can

can be proposed which may not be liable to some objections, it must, on the other hand, be allowed, that even an indifferent one may suggest *some* useful hints for improvement ; and, possibly, from *many* being offered for consideration and discussion, a system, much less exceptionable, and, consequently, more eligible, than the present, may be adopted.

The following axioms, it is presumed, will obtain universal assent, as they are self-evident truths.

1st. That it is better to prevent than to punish the commission of crimes.

2d. That the unalterable laws of truth and justice require a due proportion to be observed between crimes and punishments.

3d. That, to inflict the same punishment on crimes so essentially different, in their nature and degree, as a cruel deliberate murder and a trifling theft, is a manifest violation of those laws.

4th. That the design and uses of punishment are to deter men from committing crimes by public examples of severity.



5th. That, when capital punishments fail to produce this effect, they are *not* only useless but *injurious* to the public.

6th. That, when justice and the well-being of society require the punishment of an offender, his family (who are *not* partakers of his guilt) ought to be provided for by that community whose laws have deprived them of their natural support.

7th. That, where the end of punishment is as likely to be attained by preserving as by taking away the life of the criminal, the former mode should be adopted.

These are the fundamental principles of the proposed plan, in which the *prevention* of crimes is the primary and most extensive object. To punish criminals, and to guard against their attacks, has hitherto been the chief, if not the sole, aim of our police ; and these are, undoubtedly, objects of considerable importance ; but their operation is too partial and confined to reach the source of the evil ; so far are they from being sufficient to stop its progress, that they do not even *retard* it : their utmost effect is to divert its course to different

rent channels; and what is this but to diffuse and extend it?

The number of Patroles and Watchmen has, of late years, been greatly augmented in the Metropolis and its vicinity; executions, too, have been, and are daily, multiplying; but experience proves, that robberies never were more frequent, nor criminals, of various degrees, more numerous. The reason is plain: the remedy is totally disproportionate to the disease; the one is *partial*, the other general. Patroles and Watchmen, supposing them to be active and adroit in the performance of their duty, and superior to corruption, (which are surely great concessions,) can only guard the *particular* stations or bounds assigned them; thus, while some districts may be (by laying a very heavy burden on the inhabitants) partially defended, others are rendered proportionably insecure; the only effect produced by such expedients is to direct the inroads of the common enemy to the most vulnerable places; but it neither diminishes their numbers nor weakens their force.

The only plan of *general* and *effectual* protection of our houses and properties, from the depredations of that formidable and desperate band of robbers,

robbers, which now infest the Metropolis and its populous and extensive environs, has often been proposed, and might be carried into execution with far less expence and inconvenience than any other. It is for the inhabitants of the different parishes to be their *own* watchmen, and to perform this necessary duty by rotation. There is not a doubt but the adoption of such a plan would be attended with the most salutary effects; a formidable army of volunteers, thus patrolling the streets every night, in defence of their properties, their lives, and their families, would at once be a sure guard from any attacks, *detect* the plunderer in his return from more *distant* expeditions, and prevent his entrance into those nocturnal asylums of vice, where plunder is, with equal expedition and security, secreted or dissipated; where desperate confederacies are cemented, and triumphant villany, flushed with the confidence of numbers, union, and success, meditates more extensive schemes of future mischief.

A plan like this, which would not only insure protection, but, by opposing insuperable obstructions to the attempts of criminals, would, in many instances, prevent the perpetration of crimes, ought surely to be adopted without hesitation or delay.

But,

But, though it is materially beneficial to society to deprive those, who now subsist by preying upon it, of the encouragement which they derive from the facility of attack, and the improbability of meeting with resistance, and to render it extremely difficult, if not absolutely impracticable, for them to *subsist* by their iniquitous profession, it is of still higher importance to prevent the *rising* generation from entering into it, by every means which the wisdom of the Legislature can invent. This is striking at the *root* of the evil, and would at once promote the welfare of society and the great cause of humanity; since it would, by decreasing the number of offenders, preclude, in an equal degree, the necessity of punishment and the hazard of depredation.

This plan of reformation, having for its principal object the *prevention* of crimes, should begin by adopting the means already suggested,\* or any that may more effectually separate those accused persons, whom the law deems *innocent*, from the culprits who have been condemned; that, on their acquittal, they may return, uninjured and uncontaminated, to their families and to society. This the immutable laws of justice, to which all human institutions should yield implicit obedience, strictly enjoin.

\* See p. 79, &c.

enjoin. They also demand, that the children of all those, whom the sentence of the laws, whether by confinement, transportation, or death, incapacitates from supporting their families, should not only be maintained at the public expence, but that they should be prevented from associating with the companions of their unhappy and abandoned parents, by whom they will otherwise be trained to a similar course of infamy and vice.

To effect this just and necessary measure, those male children who are of sufficient age should be provided with services, or bound out as apprentices, or fitted to serve the state in the naval or military line ; and the remainder, who are too young, should be maintained in public working-schools, erected, at the expence of Government, in some healthful and airy situation, where they should be provided with employment suited to their age and ability, and taught to read and write, that they may be enabled to become useful members of society. The expence, that would attend an institution of this kind, could not be esteemed a reasonable objection, since these unhappy children must, *at all events*, be maintained by the *public*, and the only question is, whether they should *live* by begging, by thieving, or by industry ? this, surely, cannot require a moment's deliberation to determine.



determine. Besides, the *saving* that would certainly be made to the public, from the proposed alteration of the poor-laws, which would intirely abolish the expence of removals, litigated settlements, parish-feasts, and the contributions extorted by the numerous tribe of common beggars, would constitute a fund *amply* sufficient to answer this and many other useful purposes. So far would an establishment of this nature be from increasing, that it would lessen, the *burden*, while it promoted the security, of the community, as it would augment the number of its useful and industrious members in the same proportion as it diminished that of the indolent and the profligate, who now subsist by begging or depredation.

Another class of unhappy children, who are now abandoned to all the complicated miseries of penury, immorality, and ill usage, may, with no less justice, plead an interest with the acknowledged humanity and generosity of Britons, for admission into such an asylum, since their lot is still more severe than that of those whom the sentence of the law reduces to the state of orphans. The *latter* have a chance of obtaining such protection and subsistence as the infamous companions of their guilty parents may vouchsafe to bestow, or the niggardly parsimony of obdurate parish-officers may be compelled

compelled to afford them ; but the miserable offspring, (of those monsters, for it would be an abuse of language to call them *parents*,) who find the most cruel and implacable of enemies in the authors of their existence, have not even this wretched alternative.

The laws of civilized states coincide with the practice of the most rude and savage nations, in consigning to *parents* an unlimited authority over their children, till they arrive at a sufficient age to provide for themselves. They rationally suppose, that the strong impulse of parental affection will effectually prevent this implicit confidence from being abused. Instances of this important trust being violated, or even negligently discharged, are indeed rarely found among *uncivilized* nations ; but, such is the constitution of human nature, that vice gains strength as *refinement* advances in society. This is the invariable effect of causes which it is foreign to the present purpose to investigate ; and hence it proceeds, that the lower orders of the community in populous cities, who are corrupted, though *unpolished*, by the arts of civilization, are frequently to the last degree *negligent* of, and sometimes no less *cruel* to, their children.

The

The *luxury* of the vulgar, which seeks no higher indulgence than beastly intoxication, extinguishes every humane and tender sentiment, while it irritates and inflames the malignant and irascible passions of the soul.

This sordid and baleful vice intirely corrupts the mind which yields to its power ; it converts industry into idleness or mischievous activity ; destroys domestic happiness ; and totally extirpates parental affection from the human breast.

Drunkenness is rarely the predominant vice of those in *high* life, however they may occasionally give way to it ; and, even in those few instances where it exerts its utmost power, the evil consequences are, in a great measure, confined to the parties themselves. Their *wealth*, which affords them sufficient means to gratify this worse-than-brutal appetite, exempts them from the temptation of invading the property of others, while it supplies maintenance and education to their families.

But this vice gains an absolute ascendancy over the minds of those, in the *lower* ranks of the community, of either sex, who addict themselves

to it. With *them* it is the ruling passion, and leads them to the commission of crimes, which are injurious to society, ruinous to their families, and, frequently, destructive to themselves. If the evil consequences of their conduct extended only to the criminals, no one could, with reason, lament them; but the misfortune is, that the punishments, due to the guilty parents, are by *them* inflicted on their innocent children, whom they regard with the most implacable aversion, because they are *obstacles* to the gratification of their darling vice. They know it is their duty to provide food and raiment for their children; and the produce of their labour, if properly applied, they are conscious would enable them to do it. But their weekly earnings, acquired perhaps by the utmost exertions of industry, are devoted to the purchase of a slow but deadly *poison*, equally destructive to their bodies and their minds; while their wretched offspring, oppressed with the accumulated hardships of hunger, cold, and nakedness, cry to them in vain for that relief, which, though they have determined not to afford, they are conscious they ought not to deny. To have continually before their eyes objects which obstruct their favourite pursuit, remind them of their unnatural want of affection, and the violation of those duties which even the *brute-creation* are happy

happy to perform, must excite in their minds ideas of disgust and aversion. The reiterated and importunate demands of the innocent sufferers, for relief, serve only to increase the hatred, and provoke the resentment, of their cruel parents, to whom those moving expressions of their unmerited afflictions are the most severe and just reproaches !

Look down for a moment on this scene of guilt and horror, ye exalted ornaments of Britain ! who are no less distinguished for your affluence than your humanity ! You are favoured by Providence with sensibility to feel the miseries of others ; with inclination and ability to *relieve* them. Many of you, perhaps, are blessed with children whom you regard with the fervour of parental affection. You are not ashamed to acknowledge, that the offspring of the poor are as innocent, as helpless, as your own ; suppose, then, that they have *exchanged* situations ; conceive your beloved children deprived of every comfort, nay, almost of the bare necessities, of life, pinched with cold, nakedness, and hunger, and confined to a filthy room where they must wait the return of their inexorable tyrants. The time at length arrives ; and they enter this wretched dwelling intoxicated with liquor and inflamed with passion, which breaks forth in horrid oaths or acts



of brutal violence : the innocent and helpless victims of their rage stand before them, trembling at once with weakness, cold, and terror, and expressing, by their piteous countenance, those wants they are *afraid* to mention ! Think how it would wring your hearts to see *your* children exposed to the *least* of these unmerited sufferings for a single day, nay, for a *moment* ! Then reflect, that *hundreds* of children, in this Metropolis, are consigned to this dreadful state of existence by their abandoned parents, from whose ungoverned and furious passions even their lives are continually endangered ! It was in such a tempest of rage the poor unprotected Higson was lately murdered, by his father, for *daring* to ask for bread !! Yet, lamentable as his fate appears, perhaps the decisive blow, which terminated his suffering and secured his innocence, was the most fortunate event that could possibly happen to him.

The observation, \* “ that the wretchedness of “ the poor tends to the corruption and profligacy “ of their manners,” is peculiarly applicable to those unhappy children whose parents are addicted to drunkenness. Each circumstance of their *present* misery is an *incitement* to future guilt. —  
Stranger.

\* See p. 40.

Strangers to every principle of virtue, and having constantly before their eyes examples of profaneness and debauchery, how is it possible they should retain their native innocence, even if it be admitted that the infant mind is *equally* susceptible of good or evil impressions? *All* children have a strong propensity to *imitate* the conduct of their parents; but the ill-fated offspring of the indigent and debauched are *driven* to the commission of crimes by the united and resistless force of example, severity, want, and despair! Any *one* of these powerful motives has often triumphed over virtue, which has been fortified by precept and confirmed by long and habitual practice, even in those who have attained to manhood. — How, then, should a *child* sustain the unequal conflict with them all!

But, should it be admitted, that these unhappy children experience transient gleams of parental fondness, that *madness* has its lucid intervals, and that the stern aspect of tyranny sometimes wears a smile, to what purpose would it be, but to make the *contrast* more severely painful? Besides, the *mind* of the child suffers more by the indulgence, than his *body* can do by the correction of *such* parents. Instances are frequent of children, fatally taught by the example, and encouraged by the  
folly,

folly, of their infatuated mothers, to extend their infant hands, trembling with eagerness, for the noxious potion, long before their tongues have acquired the power of utterance !

When, besides the various causes already adverted to, which conspire to increase the number of the dissolute and profligate poor, hundreds of wretched children are thus annually trained up, by their abandoned parents, to a life of misery, beggary, prostitution, or plunder, can it be a subject of astonishment that robberies are daily increasing ? Surely it is a duty incumbent on the legislature to *save* these innocent victims from infamy and ruin, by taking them from parents who thus violate the trust reposed in them, and pervert, to the worst of purposes, that authority which the laws have too long allowed them to abuse. Let *these* children, as well as those whom the sentence of the law deprives of their parents, be taken under the protection of the public, and placed in some asylum, where similar maintenance, employment, and instruction, may be provided for them. If in this, as in the former, instance, the *expence* of such a plan should be objected to, the same answer might suffice, viz. that, as their parents have deserted them, or (which is worse) deny them the common necessities of life, and make them

them wretched and profligate, they must *ultimately* be supported by the public ; and the only question is, whether they should be suffered to *extort* this subsistence by begging or stealing, or whether they should be *voluntarily* maintained for the first few years of their lives, and by that means be made useful members of society for the remaining period ? It is to be remarked, that children, after they have attained their eighth year, are, in general, capable of earning a *considerable part* of the sum necessary to maintain them till they are old enough to be put out into the world. Another material consideration is, that every child, thus rescued from impending ruin, would benefit society in a *double* proportion, by taking from the number of its destructive, and adding to that of its profitable, members ; though, if he should be left to pursue a course of infamy and guilt, till the measure of his iniquity should be full, and his existence should be terminated by an execution, society would merely be *rid* of a nuisance by his death, notwithstanding it might have been greatly *injured* by his life.

Should it be objected, that it is an infringement of *liberty*, to deprive the parent of his children, or that it is an encouragement of *idleness* to take upon the public the burden of their maintenance,

maintenance,—it may be justly replied to the first, that the parent, by his refusal to provide for his children, and his cruel treatment of them, forfeits his *right* to exercise any authority over them; and therefore his liberty is no more infringed, by this regulation, than that of a criminal who is imprisoned for an offence he has committed.

To the latter objection, the obvious answer is, that idleness or drunkenness is, by our *present* system of laws, liable to punishment; that the due execution of these laws ought to be *enforced*; and, if they are not sufficient to remedy the evils, let other means be adopted; but on no account suffer the unhappy children to be oppressed and *enslaved* under the pretence of veneration for the cause of liberty, nor be restrained from rescuing them from a life of idleness or vice, by the apprehension that these evils would by such conduct be promoted.

The advantages of adopting so humane and just a plan would amply compensate any trouble or charge that might attend its *first* institution; and the expence itself would be continually and rapidly diminishing. The male children, thus trained to public utility, might supply our fleets and armies with recruits in time of war; in peace, they might  
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be equally serviceable to commerce or manufactures; and, as it is universally allowed, that an increase in population is an addition to the riches and prosperity of a state, it must necessarily follow, that a plan, which would be productive of this effect, while it would obstruct the progress of vice, and promote the peace and security of society, must be a public benefit of the highest estimation.

The following proposals for an alteration in the present system of penal laws, which is evidently inconsistent with justice, insufficient to answer its intended purpose, inhuman in its principle, and prejudicial in its effects, are, with due deference, submitted to the impartial judgement of the public.

To avoid repetition, the reader is requested to recur to those axioms (see p. 97) which were proposed as the *basis* of the intended reformation; the 1st and 6th of which, relating to the prevention of crimes, and the provision which ought to be made for the children of convicts, have been sufficiently exemplified.

The 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th, are immediately applicable to the *punishment* of offences; and, if

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admitted to be true, will not only *vindicate* the following deviations from the present system of criminal jurisprudence, but prove that their adoption is essentially necessary to establish the due administration of justice. Every punishment, which violates the immutable laws of truth and equity, being an exertion of unjust power, is *tyranny*, and consequently must be inconsistent with the constitution of a *free* government.

Capital punishments are manifestly so, when they are indiscriminately applied to offences so totally different, in their degree of guilt, as the most cruel and deliberate murder, and stealing a horse, a sheep, or a sixpence !

Let capital punishments *still* be inflicted on the following crimes: Murder; Rebellion; Burglary; Burning of houses, called *Arson*; Robberies of all kinds, when attended with any circumstances of wanton barbarity; Robbing Mails; Forgery; Counterfeiting the current Coin; and those crimes, *now* deemed Capital, in which *nature* and decency are equally violated.

The five crimes, which stand foremost in the above list, are all of the *same* species, however they may differ in degree; for, in Rebellion,  
Burglary,

Burglary, wilful Burning of Houses, and Robberies, attended with circumstances of wanton or deliberate cruelty, though Murder may not be actually committed, the Malicious and Murderous intention of the offender (which constitutes the real essence of Murder itself) is evidently apparent; and, as he has the guilt, he deserves the punishment, of a Murderer, which is death. — But, as it is strictly conformable to the principles of justice to make a distinction in the mode of *inflicting* capital punishments, the severity of them should be, as nearly as possible, proportionate to the enormity of the crime. The *lex talionis*, applied to all Murders perpetrated with peculiar circumstances of barbarity, would not only be strictly just, but highly *exemplary*.

One execution of this kind would tend more, to the prevention of the crime for which it should be inflicted, than that of *twenty* criminals suffering together for various and totally different offences.

It would impress, on the minds of the spectators, a lively image of severity equally just and terrible; and would inspire them with an abhorrence of that barbarity, which could induce the criminal, deliberately and without provocation, to exercise, on an innocent fellow-creature, those

torments they now see, with dreadful yet just retribution, inflicted on himself.

By a spectacle of this kind, *every* end of punishment would be answered ; and, while the important interest of humanity would be promoted by the public and exemplary punishment of cruelty, justice would be strictly preserved :—

“ — neque est lex justior ulla  
 “ Quam necis artifices arte perire suâ.”

The other crimes, included in the list of capital offences, are, it is true, essentially different from murder ; and, though the *security* of society and the *honour* of human nature may require that they should be punished with death, it would not be consistent with justice or humanity to depart from the present method of inflicting it.

To see a fellow-creature thus cut off, perhaps, in the prime and vigour of life, — to behold him one moment in full possession of his mental and corporeal powers, and the next struggling in dying agonies,—is an awful spectacle ; and, did not its *frequency* render it too familiar to the populace, it *must* operate as an example.

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To *circumscribe* its application is the surest method to heighten its effect. This is *one* signal advantage that might rationally be expected from the proposed *limitation* of capital punishments. — Another, no less important, is the *acquisition* of many members to the community, who are, by our present penal laws, cut off at a time of life when their strength and activity might be made subservient to its interest.\*

Transportation should, for the same reason, be *abolished*, or at least be so regulated as to make the convicts of some *utility* to the state, which is the case with those sent to Africa and the East Indies, who perform the duty which must otherwise devolve on more worthy and profitable members of society.

The punishment of the Ballast-Lighters, stationed so near the Metropolis, being not only unprofitable, but manifestly and extensively *injurious*, to the public, and even to the criminals themselves, should be immediately laid aside.

Highway

\* See axiom 7th, p. 98,



Highway and Foot-pad Robberies, (unattended with wanton cruelty,) Horse-stealing, and the various petty crimes which are *now* punished with death, transportation, or hard labour (as it is called) on the Thames, should have punishments assigned to them as nearly as possible *proportionate* to the criminality of the offences; the quantum of which the wisdom of the Legislature is undoubtedly competent to estimate.

The mode of punishment might be nearly the same, viz. *confinement* and *labour*; as its *duration* and *degree* would admit of a sufficient variety.

These punishments would undoubtedly be accounted, by the malefactors themselves, *worse* than Hanging; and this argument alone would be decisive in favour of a plan, which would at once mitigate the sanguinary severity, and increase the exemplary effect, of punishment; for the criminals, thus preserved from destruction, and compelled to live in a state which they universally detest, would exhibit, to their associates in guilt, a *constant* monitory spectacle, more terrible than death itself.

The most important object of all punishments, short of death, being the reformation of offenders, none should be so severe as to extinguish *hope*; for hope and fear are the most powerful agents on the human mind, and, though opposite in their nature, are *co-existent*. He, who has nothing to hope, cannot have any thing to fear; and the mind, which is reduced to such a state, is little short of desperation, stupidity, or distraction.

All human punishments, therefore, should admit of a degree of relaxation or coercion, dependent on the good or ill behaviour of the culprit.

Confinement should not, for any offence, be *perpetual*, nor labour *continual*. Both should be, in some degree, *contingent*, and dependent on the conduct of the criminal; who, being thus, in some measure, the *regulator* of his own punishment, would be constantly stimulated to his duty by his *interest*.

The Rasp-house, at Amsterdam, where such offenders, as ~~our~~ laws sentence to the gallows, are employed in Rasping Logwood for the use of the  
Dyers,

Dyers, may afford, on this occasion, useful hints for imitation.

Even in this abode of guilt, the regularity, neatness, and policy, which are the distinguishing characteristics of the Dutch, evidently appear in their management of the criminals. Though *confined*, they are allowed the benefits of wholesome diet, good air, and cleanliness, those great preservatives of health. Though their employment is extremely laborious, and each has his task assigned him, which he is indispensably necessitated to perform, all have their stated intervals of relaxation, during which they have liberty to walk in the square which is inclosed by their Prison, to make some trifling toys, (as tobacco-stoppers or snuff-boxes,) which they are permitted to sell to those whom curiosity induces to visit them, or to employ themselves in more profitable avocations. In the method, adopted to enforce the due performance of their respective tasks, there is an odd mixture of the national humour, subtilty, and severity. The refractory criminal is put into a kind of cistern, in one corner of which is a pump, to which he is confined, and at another a pipe which lets in a quantity of water, which his utmost labour is barely sufficient to throw out, so that he must pump or drown. It is scarcely necessary to add, that

that *one* application of this singular remedy generally proves an effectual cure for idleness.

This Rasp-house is the common receptacle for thieves, and various criminals, who are confined here for a certain time, proportionate to the enormity of their offences. The following instance will illustrate the beneficial effects *actually produced* by this salutary mode of punishment.

Some years ago, an Englishman (who now lives in *credit*, as a tradesman, near the Metropolis) was confined in the Rasp-house at Amsterdam; where, by employing the time allowed him in the most profitable manner he was able, he saved a sufficient sum of money to set him up in his business when the term of his confinement was expired, and he returned to his native country. This man now gratefully and freely acknowledges, that he considers his punishment (from the beneficial influence it had on his conduct) the most fortunate event of his life. Such a *fact* as this is the most decisive argument that can be adduced in support of the proposed institution.

It would certainly be an improvement of this plan, to erect several *distinct* Penitentiary-houses, each differing from the other in the duration of

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the term of confinement and in the kind and degree of labour, though all agreeing in regularity of management, wholesomeness (though not quality) of food, cleanliness, a free circulation of air, and in those general principles of *coertion* and *remission* which are calculated to operate on the *hopes* and *fears* of the culprits ; and, by such powerful motives, to effect a reformation in their conduct.— These principles, however, should be *defined* by the Legislature as accurately as the nature of the case will allow ; and nothing should be left to the discretion of those, to whom the government of these Houses may be entrusted, that *can* be properly and precisely determined by their original constitution ; though, in every establishment of this kind, *some* confidence must necessarily be reposed in the executive power, as unforeseen contingences will arise, which cannot, by any preconcerted plan, be provided against. The only remedy, on such occasions, is to make the *subordinate*, at all times, accountable to, and controulable by, the *supreme*, legislative authority.

Another principle, in which these different Penitentiary-houses should agree, is, that the culprits should have a certain stated portion of time they can call their *own* ; which should, of course,



course, be regulated by the severity or mildness of each particular institution.

The obvious intention, of establishing these *different* Houses, is to ascertain a due proportion between crimes and punishments; to separate the most atrocious from the less daring criminals; and to provide a gradual and regular *diminution* of punishment for those who give *proofs* of a sincere desire to reform.

As it may be rationally expected, that the labour of the respective inhabitants of these different Houses will produce a fund more than sufficient for their maintenance, the surplus may be applied towards defraying the original expence of erecting them; and, when that is paid, as it would probably be in a few years, it might then be applied to diminish the charge of subsisting the children of criminals, the reduction of the poor's rates, or other objects of public utility.

Having thus endeavoured to investigate the principal causes of the wretchedness and profligacy of the Poor, and the consequent increase of crimes; to propose some remedies for these public evils; to point out the defects in our Parochial and Penal Laws, and their pernicious consequen-

ces ; and to draw the mere *outline* of a plan of reformation ; it only remains to submit the whole, with due deference, to the attention and decision of the candid and impartial Public.

There are various other causes, which, though less extensive and powerful in their operation, conspire to increase the misery and profligacy of the poor. The present treatment of Insolvent Debtors, being productive of very pernicious consequences, would have been particularly considered, had not this important subject been recommended to the peculiar attention of the Legislature by a noble and strenuous advocate for the cause of reason, justice, and humanity, whose patriotic exertions, it is hoped, will at length produce a reformation so evidently necessary.

The infamous traffic of gambling, which (in spite of all restrictions hitherto invented) has resulted from every Lottery, (and from none more than the last,) and the exorbitant Interest of 30 per Cent. per Annum which Pawn-Brokers are allowed to extort from the Poor, are grievances, which have, at different times, engaged the attention of the Legislature, and still require its more effectual interposition. But the discussion  
of

of these, and other evils of inferior magnitude, exceeds the limits of the present essay.

If any thing here advanced be deemed of sufficient weight to merit the attention of the Legislature, and, by that means, to relieve the distress of the poor, to promote the welfare of society, or to serve the cause of justice and humanity, the labour of the attempt will be amply compensated. If it fail, the writer must regret that his ability falls so far short of his zeal to promote so good a cause. But, in either case, the consciousness of *meaning* well will afford him sincere and heart-felt consolation at that awful period of his existence, when all worldly prospects are shrouded in the gloom of approaching dissolution; and when the reflection, on

“ one humane, or a mere well-natur’d, deed,”

will be of more worth than all the riches, honours, or applause, which the avarice, the ambition, or the pride, of human nature so anxiously, yet so vainly, pursue!





P L A N  
FOR THE  
REDUCTION  
OF THE  
NATIONAL DEBT,

Submitted to the Consideration of Government in  
September, 1785.

LET Government purchase a certain sum, e.  
g. 20 Millions, in the 3 per Cent. Consolidated Annuities, at the Rate of 70 *per Cent.* [when this Plan was proposed, this Stock was *under 60 per Cent.*] payable in Life-Annuities, in such manner and proportions, as that each Stockholder shall receive a fair and *adequate* compensation for *sinking* his Principal of 70 per Cent.

To ascertain this proportion of Interest on the respective Lives, let them be divided into 4  
Classes :



Classes : the 1st between the Ages of 30 and 40 Years, the 2d between 40 and 50, the 3d between 50 and 60, and the 4th from 60 to 70 Years, and upwards.

Supposing the 1st class to receive 7, and the 4th 11, per Cent. interest, for *sinking* their Principal, the Average of Interest, for the first Year, would be 9 per Cent. on £14,000,000, i. e. £1,260,000, instead of £600,000, the *present* interest payable on the *nominal sum* of 20 Millions at 3 per Cent. The additional sum of £660,000, required to pay this increase of interest, it is apprehended, may be supplied from the *Sinking Fund*, which, in consequence of the Peace, and of the salutary regulations adopted by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, particularly in the collection of Taxes, must be considerably augmented.

Though the *annual* payment of Interest would be continually and rapidly decreasing, by the *extinction* of the Principal, and its *computed* average of 9 per Cent. would be continually *abating* by the prior extinction of those lives which bear the *highest* interest, — it is proposed, that the *same* annual sum of £1,260,000 should still be appropriated to the purpose of diminishing the National Debt, and that the annual saving of interest should

should be expended in converting an adequate part of the principal into Life-Annuities.

## OBSERVATIONS

ON THE FOREGOING

P L A N.

T H A T it would be highly beneficial to the Public is evident from the following considerations.

Its *first* operation would *annihilate* 6 Millions of the original Debt ; and the remaining 14 Millions (i. e. 20 Millions at 70 per Cent.) would, in the space of 20 years, be *nearly*, if not intirely, extinguished.

But, important and desirable as such an event certainly is, it will be found, comparatively, of *small* estimation, when the more powerful and advantageous effects of this plan are attentively considered. For, by the application of the *annual* saving of interest to the farther *transmutation* of the original Debt into Life-Annuities, a principle

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ciple is employed, which, by *continually* increasing the force, enlarging the extent, and accelerating the progress, of its operation, in a *triplicate compound ratio*, would extinguish the *whole* Debt in a much shorter period of time than any one, who does not advert to the astonishing effects resulting from the continual *multiplication* of numbers, increasing in such a proportion, can possibly conceive.

The following calculation of its powers, for the first *few* years, will convey some *faint* idea of what might be expected from it in a longer period of time.

Supposing a twentieth part of the 20 Millions, at 70 per Cent. (or £700,000,) to become extinct the *first* year, the *saving* of interest, at 9 per Cent. would be £63,000, which, added to £47,500, the interest *now* paid on £1,750,000, at 3 per Cent. would make £110,500, a sum *more* than sufficient to pay the interest of 1 Million and three fourths of the 3 per Cent. consols. when converted into *Life-Annuities*, at the rate of 70, and bearing an interest of 9 per Cent. as that would only amount to £110,250.

Thus,

Thus, at the end of the first year, 1 Million of the original stock would be *extinguished*, and  $1\frac{1}{4}$  Million would be *added* to the Life-Annuities, which would thus be increased  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a Million. — Now, as it is evident that the *annual* extinction of Principal must *increase* in proportion to the *augmentation* of the gross sum of Life-Annuities, it must be admitted, that the *second* year must produce a *greater* extinction than the first, the third than the second, and so on, *seriatim*, whether the *average* of one-twentieth part for the annual decrease of Life-Annuities, and 9 per Cent. for the interest, be allowed or not; since, *whatever* the average may be, (whether a 20th or a 25th for the Principal, and 9 or 10 per Cent. for the Interest,) the *annual* decrease on £20,750,000 must be greater than that on 20 Millions *only*; consequently, the annual *augmentation* of Life-Annuities must cause a proportional *decrease* of debt. Again, this annual decrease of debt must cause an *increase*, not only in the *saving* of interest payable on Life-Annuities, (whatever the average of such interest may be,) but also in the *saving* of 3 per Cent. on the sum *annually* converted into Life-Annuities: e. g. as £47,500 would be saved by the Million and three-fourths converted into Life-Annuities at the end of the

*first* year, an increased saving of interest would accrue, from the *additional* sum converted, the second year, and so on.

The *conjoint* operation of the *three* causes above-mentioned, viz. the annual *augmentation* of Life-Annuities,—the *saving* of interest on their annual extinction,—and *that* on the 3 per Cents annually converted into Life-Annuities, — form the *triplicate* compound ratio, which, as has been observed, must be *continually* operating, with *increasing* force and celerity, to extinguish the national debt.

Unwilling to trespass on the reader's time and patience, by minute and tedious calculations of its *annual* progress, I will only state the account on the supposition that *no* effect would be produced by the annual increase of these combined powers, — in other words, that the annual extinction and augmentation of Life-Annuities would be no greater in any succeeding, than in the first, year, i. e. 1 Million decrease, and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  Million augmentation.

At the end of the *eighth* year, then, (even on the above supposition,) 8 Millions of the original



nal 20 would be extinguished, and 14 Millions of the 3 per Cent. Consols would be added; which would make the gross amount of Life-Annuities, at the expiration of that time, 26 Millions, exclusive of the 8 paid off.

The annual Interest, therefore, would be, at the end of the eighth year, increased, from £1,260,000, to £1,638,000, (at the average of 9 per Cent.) the twentieth part of which, £81,000, would be the saving of interest this year, which, added to £75,000, (the annual interest of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Millions of the 3 per Cents.) would be £156,700, a sum very nearly sufficient to pay the interest of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Millions at 9 per Cent. i. e. to convert *that sum* into Life-Annuities at the beginning of the ninth year; though, if the annual *increasing* power of these conjoint causes be taken into the estimate, it would undoubtedly be found to produce a *much* greater effect.

However, even on the above supposition, it will appear, that, in 8 years, the annual *extinction* would be increased from 1 Million to £1,210,000, which (at 70 per Cent.) is near 1 *third part*; the annual *saving* of interest, on this extinction, from £63,000 to £81,700, and the annual *transmutation* of 3 per Cent. into Life-Annuities from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Millions;

Millions; and that 34 Millions of the original Debt would, in this short period of time, be converted into Life-Annuities, without imposing any *additional* burden on the People, or drawing any larger sum from the Sinking Fund than the £660,000 at *first* allotted for this salutary purpose.

The *increasing* acquisition of force and effect, with which the conjoint powers above referred to would act, in every *succeeding* year, is too evident to need farther illustration; it therefore only remains to consider what consequences the proposed plan might produce with respect to *those* public creditors whom it more immediately affects,—to Stockholders in *general*,—and to *Public Credit* itself.

Every individual, whose stock should be converted into Life-Annuities on the above Plan, would be allowed an adequate compensation for every *nominal* £100 he has invested in the 3 per Cents. though the market-price is, at *this* time, [see the *date* of the Plan,] 10 per Cent. less. — This advance of 10 per Cent. on £60 is, in *reality*, an addition of more than *sixteen* per Cent. on the *capital* stock, and would surely be a sufficient inducement for the holders of such stock to accept the proposed *equivalent* annuity, payment of which, at stated periods, during their lives, would be indubitably

bitably secured, in lieu of an unstable and fluctuating property, liable to be affected, not only by foreign wars or domestic dissensions, but by every adverse blast of interested malignity or popular caprice.

By the proposed Plan, a member of the *youngest* class would receive an addition of £19 per annum, and one of the *oldest* of £47 per annum, for every *nominal* £1000 he now possesses. This increase of income will always be, to *many*, a most desirable object; so that there can be little reason to doubt, that an *open* subscription, to a Fund constructed on this Plan, would soon be full; though it may, perhaps, be justly apprehended, by administration, that the increase of *Principal* [referring to the *market-price* of the 3 per Cents. when this Plan was proposed to Government] and interest which this Plan holds out is *too much*, when the certain security of the annuity and the punctuality of its payments are considered, as it would, in the *latter* respect, have a decided advantage of every *private* security.

But the benefits of the proposed Plan, far from being confined to those only who should accept the equivalent it offers, would be extended to *every* stock-holder, by enhancing the general  
price

price of stock, at the same time that it would establish Public Credit itself on a *firm* and *durable* basis; alleviate the intolerable burden of Debt that now oppresses the *inhabitants* of Britain; and raise the British Empire to a degree of pre-eminence above the surrounding Nations, far higher even than that from which it has so fatally and so rapidly declined.

Navy-Office,  
17th Sept. 1785.

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SHOULD it be objected, that the *rise* in the price of Stocks, since the above letter was written, destroys the force of the arguments adduced to prove the benefit the Stock-holder would have received from the proposed advance of 16 per Cent. on his Capital, it is readily admitted, that the objection is, in this respect, incontrovertible ; yet, at the same time, it affords the most demonstrable evidence of the *superior* advantage the Stock-holder and the Public would have obtained by the adoption of such a Plan at the time it was proposed. But, as it does not, in any respect, alter the *Principles* on which the Plan is formed, it is by no means an argument against the expediency of putting it in practice at this time.

The Plan has been submitted to the inspection of a very able Calculator within these few days, (previous to its intended publication ; ) and the *only* objection he makes to it is, that the interest of 7 per Cent. for the *first class*, is rather too *high* ;

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but this is certainly an argument in *favour* of the Plan itself, since it proves that it might be adopted with *less* expence to the Public.

25th of March, 1786.



T H E E N D.

A  
COMPARATIVE VIEW  
OF  
Mr. GILBERT'S BILL  
AND THE

PLANS PROPOSED in this WORK :

Shewing the exact Resemblance between them,  
as far as the Bill extends, and pointing out  
farther Regulations necessary to be adopted.

EVERY true friend to his country, and to  
humanity, must rejoice at the prospect,  
which the " Heads of the Bill," submitted by  
Mr. Gilbert to the consideration of parliament,  
open to his view; and it is with peculiar satis-  
faction that the writer of the foregoing sheets  
observes the striking resemblance between the  
leading characters of this plan and the outlines  
he had ventured to sketch.

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Briefly

Briefly to point out this similitude, and humbly to suggest to the public consideration such parts of his essay as do not appear to have been adverted to in this Bill, and which he conceives it might be expedient to adopt, as they manifestly coincide with the benevolent intentions of the respectable framer of the Bill, are the objects of the following observations.

To avoid tedious repetitions of what he has already written, or unnecessary quotations from Mr. Gilbert's Bill, he is obliged to refer the reader, occasionally, to both.

The Preamble to the Bill, after briefly mentioning "the grievances and the burthens" which the public sustains from the present state of the poor, whose various calamities, immoralities, impositions, and depredations, are treated of at large from the 37th to the 64th pages of the foregoing pamphlet, ascribes them to the same causes, viz. the inefficacy of the present system of poor-laws, and the mismanagements and embezzlements of the revenues intended by the legislature for the support of the poor.

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The Preamble then proposes the same remedy for these evils as I have done, in page 64 and 65, and equally inculcates the necessity of establishing “ one law of police which may prevent “ idleness, drunkenness, and vagrancy,”—“ be “ effectual to encourage labour and industry,”— “ to protect, support, and educate, the infant “ poor in principles of religion and morality,— “ to punish such of the poor as are idle, profligate, and abandoned, — and to support and “ cherish those who are really necessitous, in- “ firm, and impotent.”

The necessity of adopting *every one* of these desirable and salutary regulations is so strongly insisted on, and the evils arising from the neglect of them are so minutely described, in various parts of the foregoing pamphlet, that I must, on this occasion, content myself with a *general* reference.

The mode of collecting and distributing the revenue for the maintenance of the poor;—the quantum of each parish-assessment to be determined by an average of former years; — reasonable salaries to be allowed to the collectors,

&c. See Bill, p. 11; and Inferior Politics, p. 64 and 65.

Having, as succinctly as possible, demonstrated the remarkable coincidence of the regulations proposed to be adopted in the Heads of Mr. Gilbert's Bill, and those recommended in my pamphlet, it remains to point out such *farther* reformatations as I have before recommended, and which, I humbly conceive, might, with propriety, constitute a part of a Bill, formed for the joint purposes "of relief" and employment of the poor, and for the "*improvement* of the police, of this country."\*

#### DRUNKENNESS and PROFLIGACY of the POOR.

The reader is requested to compare what is said on these subjects in the foregoing pamphlet, from p. 102 to 113, with Mr. Gilbert's observations on them in the Preamble to the Bill, and to remark the *exact* resemblance between the plan proposed in his Bill and that in the 102d page of Inferior Politics, for the education, maintenance, and employment, of the

INFANT

\* See title of Mr. Gilbert's Bill.



## INFANT POOR.

The humane attention, which Mr. Gilbert has bestowed on "the protection, support, and education, of the Infant Poor," [see Preamble to the Bill, and p. 19, under the head of Sunday Schools,] is highly laudable; but it seems capable of being still farther extended. By the term "*Infant Poor*," I apprehend, Mr. Gilbert only means the children of such as *actually* become chargeable to some parish; but it has been observed, in various parts of the foregoing pamphlet, that there are *numbers* of children, not included in this description of Infant Poor, who have an equal, nay, perhaps a superior, claim on the public for "protection, support, and education." Such are all those children "deserted or ill-treated by their parents, *or deprived of them by the sentence of the laws*:" see p. 64, where I have proposed to allot a part of the *fund*, which, in Mr. Gilbert's Bill, is called "the casual and contingent fund," for that just and salutary purpose.

It is no less remarkable than true, that, in all public transactions, whether between differ-

rent nations or the various parts which constitute one community, the obligations of justice and humanity are strongly enforced by the powerful motive of *interest*.— That this observation is peculiarly applicable to deserted, helpless, infants, and more especially to those whom the *laws* have deprived of their parents, I have endeavoured (and I hope not unsuccessfully) to prove. See *Inferior Politics*, p. 49 and 50, 91 to 93, and, more at large, from 103 to 112; where the objections, arising from this supposed restraint on liberty and increase of expence to the public, are considered and refuted. Indeed it is demonstrably evident, that the rapid and alarming increase of every vice, among the lower orders of the people, is, in a great measure, owing to the shameful neglect of the *Infant Poor*, and particularly of the offspring of convicts and beggars, who are not barely *deserted* by the public, (whose duty and interest it is to “protect, educate, and support,” them, till they can get their own living,) but suffered to be systematically trained up to the highest proficiency in villany, and thus maintained by the community in a manner the most expensive, impolitic, and disgraceful. The various classes of friendless *Infant Poor must* ultimately derive their

their subsistence from the public : — the only question, therefore, is, whether they should be suffered to gain their livelihood by lawless rapine, or be instructed and assisted in doing it by honest industry ? or, in other words, whether their existence should be an injury or a benefit to society ? See p. 111.

#### VAGRANCY.

It is very pertinently remarked, by the judicious framer of the proposed Bill, That the Act of 43d Eliz. which is the foundation of the present system of Poor-Laws, “ was wisely  
“ framed, and well adapted to the circumstan-  
“ ces and situation of the country when it was  
“ passed ;” \* and, so long as those poor, who were worthy of relief, were certain of obtaining it, the laws against *vagrants*, though severe, were just ; and they will be so again, if the salutary purposes intended by this Bill, which are,  
“ to punish such of the poor as are idle, profligate, and abandoned, and to support and  
“ cherish those who are really necessitous, infirm, and indigent,” can be effected.

But, in the present defective state of the Poor-Laws, the Vagrant-Act, in its *construction*,

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confounds

\* See General Observations on the Bill, p. 32.

confounds calamity with guilt, making no distinction between idleness and impotence; and, in its operation, vibrates between the opposite extremes of exemplary justice and oppressive tyranny.

Every beggar, says the law, is a vagrant, and every vagrant a criminal. This comprehensive sentence of condemnation falls alike "on the just and the unjust;" and subjects the alien, the lame, the blind, the aged, nay, infants, lunatics, and idiots, to the same punishments as the idle, voluntary, guilty, vagrant. See *Inferior Politics*, p. 59.

" The numerous tribe of *beggars*, distinguished by the common and opprobrious appellation of *vagrants*, may be divided into two classes, which, though in appearance they are nearly alike, differ widely in their real characters and intentions. The first class includes all those who solicit the contributions of the humane because they are *incapacitated* from earning their bread; the second comprehends all those who assume the mask of pretended infirmity and distress to conceal their idleness; and this is by far the most numerous. The former, who beg from necessity,

" cessity, have an undoubted right to be main-  
 " tained at the public expence; the latter,  
 " who make begging their choice, should be  
 " compelled to abandon it: but, notwith-  
 " standing the impolicy of suffering *any* beg-  
 " gars is universally allowed, and the increase  
 " of their numbers in the metropolis is a ge-  
 " neral subject of complaint, it cannot be re-  
 " medied but by a reformation in our Parish-  
 " Laws, which by oppressing the necessitous,  
 " and encouraging the idle vagrant, augment  
 " the number of both classes." See Inferior  
 Politics, p. 44 to 59.

The rigorous execution of the Vagrant-Act,  
 recommended in the Bill, p. 22, will undoubt-  
 edly be equally politic and just, when a provi-  
 sion shall be made for *all* but the idle, volun-  
 tary, vagrant: but, might it not save much  
 trouble, if, instead of " being conveyed, from  
 " district to district, to the place where they  
 " were last settled," the parish, in which they  
 were apprehended, were empowered to demand,  
 of that to which they belong, the charges of  
 their apprehension and maintenance? or, would  
 it not be adviseable to abolish *intirely* the  
 troublesome and expensive practice of *removals*,  
 either



either by this mode of payment (subject always to the controul of the district, or superior, committees) or by enacting that, from the time of passing the Act, or such determinate time as the wisdom of the legislature might appoint, all the *resident* poor in every parish shall belong to that parish, wherever their former settlement may have been? See *Inferior Politics*, p. 60 to 63.

BURGLARY, FELONY, &c. See Bill, p. 22.

Notwithstanding my unfeigned respect for the abilities and humanity of the respectable framer of the Bill, I cannot help expressing surprise and disappointment at not finding, under this head, or in any part of the Bill "for the *improvement* of the police," the least mention of the various defects and absurdities in our *Penal Laws*, which stand no less in need of speedy and effectual reformation than our *Poor-Laws*.

Having, in the foregoing pamphlet, taken the most comprehensive view of this important subject that my limited abilities will allow, I shall content myself with barely mentioning a few of the most material alterations I have ventured

tured to suggest, referring the reader to the pamphlet itself, from p. 38 to 125, for farther information.

1st. That all persons, accused of crimes, (who are, by the law, deemed *innocent*,) should be kept in *separate* prisons, and receive different treatment from those actually convicted, even where the crime, if proved, should not, by the *present* system of penal laws, be deemed capital.

2d. That all persons acquitted should have a *testimonial* of their acquittal, (and of their character, if deserving of it;) that they should be *indemnified* for their loss of time, and any other injury themselves or families may have sustained by their confinement; and that, "from the moment a man, who supports himself and family by labour, is apprehended, on a criminal accusation, to the time of his acquittal, his family, bereaved of their proper and natural protector, should be maintained at the public expence." See p. 75 to 79. This is a duty the public is undoubtedly bound, by the immutable obligations of justice, to perform. See p. 73 to 80.

3d.

3d. That the evidence of an accomplice, by his own confession not less guilty, and probably much more so, — sometimes perhaps an *instigator* of the crime, — ought to have very little influence in the conviction of a prisoner ; and “ that the indemnity which the law holds forth “ to accomplices endangers the lives of innocent “ men ; and the *reward* given them not only “ encourages but creates criminals, and is one “ great cause of the alarming increase of robbery.” P. 87 to 91.

4th. That the frequency and number of our public executions totally destroy their *monitory* effect on the people ; that the *indiscriminate* application of capital punishment to crimes totally different is equally impolitic and unjust ; and that, to circumscribe its operation, and, in particular instances, to *increase* its severity, is the surest means to heighten its effect : p. 117.

5th. That confinement and labour might be adopted in lieu of capital punishments in many cases ; and that *distinct* penitentiary-houses, differing in the term of their confinement and in the kind and degree of labour, and admitting  
of

of certain degrees of relaxation or coercion, dependent on the behaviour of the culprits, would probably be attended with the most salutary effects. See p. 115 to 123.

Experience has proved, that the confinement of a number of criminals together, on-board the ballast-lighters, and stationing them so near the metropolis, has greatly increased the evils it was intended to restrain.

The transportation of criminals to Botany-Bay is, on many accounts, preferable to their confinement in the ballast-lighters at Woolwich: as a *temporary*, it is undoubtedly a happy, expedient, to empty our jails and rid the nation of an insufferable nuisance.

But, though capital punishments destroy, and transportation exterminates, offenders, they are so far from eradicating, that it is evident they rather tend to multiply, offences.

Capital punishments, even during their immediate execution, have no monitory effect, and the community sustains a certain loss by this impolitic amputation of its members,  
which,

which, probably, might not only be preserved, but rendered highly useful.

Penitentiary-houses, instituted on the plan I recommended in the foregoing pamphlet, would, at once, answer the desirable purposes of punishment, admonition, and reformation; and would operate, with powerful and unremitting energy, on those great springs of action, — the sensations, the hopes, and the fears, of the human mind.

It might, at least, be expedient to make the attempt, since its consequences could not possibly be more prejudicial than those we experience from the operation of the present system of penal laws, which is now universally reprobated.

It is therefore to be hoped, that, as Mr. Gilbert's Bill is *avowedly* intended "*for the improvement of the police of this country,*" as well as "*for the better relief and employment of the poor,*" he will, in the Appendix, which he says will be prepared hereafter, (see note 3, p. 27,) advert to the reformation of the penal laws, which is a subject in every respect worthy his humanity, his abilities, and his patriotism.

T H E E N D.



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E R R A T A.

- P. 38. l. penult. After the word *vice* ! add the word *missled*—  
missled, perhaps, from your earliest infancy, &c.
- P. 45. l. 17. For *want or indigence* r. *weakness or indigence*.
- P. 67. l. 8. For *insolence* r. *insolvency*.
- P. 78. the last line. For *is* r. *are*.
- P. 91. l. 24. For *bereft* r. *bereaved*.
- P. 128. For £660,000 £660,000.
- P. 137. For *since the above letter was written* r. *since the foregoing plan was proposed*.
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